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# The Sensory World of Italian Renaissance Art



François Quiviger

The *Renaissance* often refers to an era when art, philosophy and other profound expressions of human culture underwent a revolutionary rebirth. New ideas, however, grew in the cradle of old modes of thinking: the Renaissance inherited and developed a medieval conception of the mind based on the assumption that there was nothing in the mind that had not reached it via the senses. Nowhere is this more noticeable than in the world of art.

In *The Sensory World of Italian Renaissance Art* François Quiviger explores the ways in which sensations began to take on a new significance in the art of the sixteenth century. He discusses the presence and function of sensation in Renaissance ideas and practices, investigating their link to mental imagery, and shows how Renaissance artists made touch, sound and scent palpable to the minds of their audience. He points to the shifts in ideas and theories on representation, which were evolving throughout the century, and explains how this shaped early modern notions of art, spectatorship and artistic creation.

By setting art and ideas on representation side by side in the same intellectual environment, *The Sensory World of Italian Renaissance Art* presents a comprehensive study of the period's theories of art in the context of the actual works. Extensively researched and beautifully illustrated, this book will appeal to students as well as scholars of art history, and indeed to anyone interested in this fascinating cultural period.

*With 99 illustrations, 39 in colour*

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THE SENSORY WORLD OF ITALIAN RENAISSANCE ART





# The Sensory World of Italian Renaissance Art



FRANÇOIS QUIVIGER

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1 The brain and the senses, from Johann Amos Comenius, *Orbis sensualium pictus* (Nuremberg, 1679).

# Introduction



This book explores the place and function of non-visual sensations in the imagination and art of the Italian Renaissance. It is divided into two parts: the first deals with broad Renaissance ideas about sensation in mental imagery and artistic creation while the second focuses on specific clusters of sensations. The first part discusses the presence and role of sensation in Renaissance assumptions, ideas and practices related to multi-sensory mental imagery and its representation. The second part examines how Renaissance artists made the most basic perceptions of tactile contact, sonic communication and scented air visible to the mind of their audience. The conclusion points to the presence, nature, function and meaning of sensation in Renaissance art as productive of space and meaning.

Western religion is the main reason why sensation is important for Western art. From Late Antique to Baroque times the Church was the main patron of the arts and its god was the only suffering incarnated god of the history of religion. Most of Europe was illiterate and the Church considered images the best means of reaching this large uneducated audience. For this purpose it commissioned images addressed to the lowest common denominator, appealing therefore to the lowest means of cognition: the senses. In this context images increasingly served as aids to vivid empathic imagining of the sentient body of a human and suffering god.<sup>1</sup> This culture of sensory imagining inherited from late medieval religion is the foundation on which took place the reception of Classical art and the expansion of Italian Renaissance art.

Much has been written on the rise of visuality in the Renaissance and the emblematic invention of perspective.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, after a period of enthusiastic experimentation Renaissance artists made only very discreet use of perspective and concentrated their attention on the most difficult and prized part of their trade: the depiction of the human figure. In so many Renaissance works it is the human figure that provides indication of space. Thus, outside the confines of perspective, the visuality of Renaissance art may best be understood by an excerpt from Aristotle's treatise *On Sense and Sensible Objects* (437A) stating that sight is the most important of the senses because it provides the most information about the outside world.<sup>3</sup> In the visual arts this approach translates as prompts and signs alerting the viewer to apprehend the picture through the imagination of sound, touch, taste or smell. These signs are also the visual traces of the way Renaissance culture represented its own sensory relation to the world.

To explore these questions I have applied ideas, tested in the field of anthropology, which assert that a culture can be characterized through the ways in which it organizes the sensorium (the sensory system), and censors or promotes certain clusters of perceptions at the expense of others.<sup>4</sup> The fields of sensory history and anthropology have expanded in the past twenty years. Founding work has been laid by David Howes and Constance Classen.<sup>5</sup> The recent history of the senses by Robert Jütte provides a broad and excellent primer,<sup>6</sup> while the works of Susan Harvey, C. M. Woolgar and Alain Corbin are the spearheads of a growing scholarly interest in the importance of sensation in cultural history.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, recent research in social history and material culture provide increasing information on the sensory world represented in images.<sup>8</sup> In the visual arts the study of the senses has mostly focused on the allegorical tradition and is still best exemplified by the catalogue *Immagini del Sentire* of 1996.<sup>9</sup> Some scholars have studied the senses in art outside the allegorical context, most notably Michael Camille for late medieval art and Reindert Falkenburgh for Netherlandish art. With a very few exceptions, Italian Renaissance art has rarely received much sensory attention.<sup>10</sup>



Understandably sight and visuality have dominated art historical interests to the point that in John Shearman's *Only Connects* the Renaissance spectator seems sometimes hardly more than an optical entity.<sup>11</sup> Renaissance art theories have been studied, for the Quattrocento by Michael Baxandall while the most important recent contributions for the Cinquecento are undoubtedly those of David Summers, Carl Goldstein and Robert Williams.<sup>12</sup> Particularly relevant for the purpose of this book are the tracks opened by David Summers's observations, in *The Judgment of Sense*, regarding the parallel expansion of naturalism and Aristotelian faculty psychology.

There is no sensation in art without the imagination of sensation. The faculty of imagination and its history in the Renaissance have been extensively studied. I have relied on the basic simplified Aristotelian theory endlessly repeated in vernacular literature and left aside the more specialized debates of sixteenth-century philosophical texts.<sup>13</sup> Even if as a concept the 'five senses' still holds mostly unquestioned currency in everyday speech, ideas about sensory physiology have dramatically changed since the Renaissance. I have on many occasions – and particularly when dealing with touch – approached Renaissance visual and textual accounts of sensation with present-day categories. Aspiring to provide a primer to sensation in Renaissance art, rather than a comprehensive taxonomy, I have focused on mainstream representations of the simplest perceptions of each sense – keeping in mind that sensation never occurs in isolation. It is my hope that this book may prompt further attention to various subjects of obvious sensory interest that I have omitted: visions of Hell, battle scenes, organ players, figures blowing brass instruments in the ears of ascetics and dreamers, eaters and countless others.

How did early modern Europeans represent their own thought when thought was believed to proceed by means of multi-sensory images? By which methods did they train and develop memory and imagination to process, handle and represent mental imagery? To approach these questions Chapter I focuses on the standard Aristotelian definition of sensation and perception and the two main theories of art active during the Renaissance: the doctrine

of the Church and the humanistic theory of art. Chapter 2 explores a category of sixteenth-century emblematic devices defined in its time as a representation of image-based thinking: the *impresa*. I then move to methods of construction and visualization of animated mental images: first the principle of the classical art of memory, and second, its application to mainstream devotional practices echoed by late medieval meditation handbooks and spiritual exercises. These provide samples of the precepts through which early modern Europeans built and used multi-sensory mental imagery.

Chapter 3 approaches Renaissance multi-sensory imagination from the angle of artistic creation. The first section focuses on methods of drawing and animating the human figure developed from the fifteenth century onwards in Italian workshops and art academies. The second contrasts the methods of construction discussed in the first part with rituals of destruction by examining the nature and purpose of northern iconoclastic assaults on the sensory organs of painted, carved and cast images. Chapter 4 examines the presence of sensation in the theory and playful practice of Renaissance ornamentation with particular attention to the continuity of medieval sensory imagery in classical disguise. The fifth and final chapter of this first part discusses two symmetric aspects of the allegorical tradition of the five senses: the ancestry of personifications of the senses in religious and secular painting and the introduction of images of sacred and profane subjects as part of the accessories surrounding allegories of the senses.

These two aspects, origins and iconography, pave the way for the study of sensation outside the confines of the allegorical tradition, in mainstream imagery, where representing sensation generates meaning. This is the subject of the second part, which explores the iconography of non-visual sensory data in Italian Renaissance art.

The first chapter of this section discusses the Renaissance conception of sight as a data binding sense; the following three chapters each deal with Renaissance depictions of various clusters of sensations dominated by touch, smell and sound. In order of appearance these are: bodily and postural awareness, touching, being touched, feeling ambient temperature, smelling pleasant

perfume and stench, imagining a figure tuning a string instrument to her voice in an illuminated initial, a tavern, a garden with a screaming horse and a landscape with a distant bagpiper and, finally, attending a Renaissance banquet.

The last chapter is on banquets rather than on taste. From the late fifteenth century Renaissance banquets developed into spectacular multi-sensory displays of variety and abundance. As we shall see, their description, representations and code of conduct are particularly loquacious informants of the sensory world of the arts of the Italian Renaissance.

At the core of Renaissance art theory is the assertion that painting, sculpture and architecture are liberal arts, intellectual disciplines, the practice of which required the exercise of the mind, not the body. It would be a mistake, however, to think that this intellectualization excluded the realm of the senses. As we shall now see, the senses were an integral part of the Renaissance printed maps of the mind.



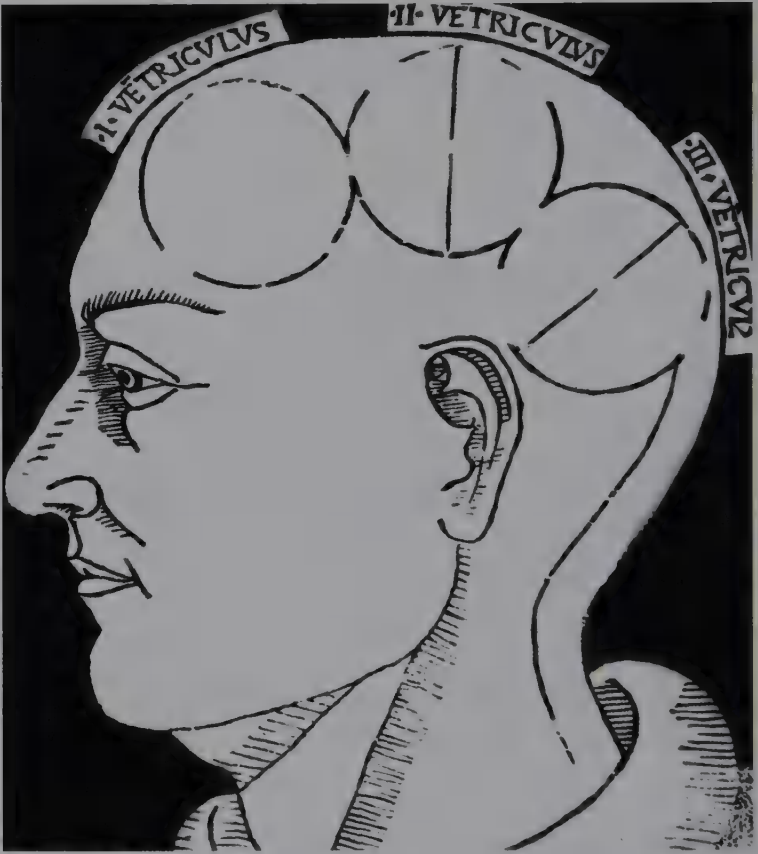
2 Ornamental detail from the *impresa* of Emperor Ferdinand, from Girolamo Ruscelli, *Le Imprese illustri...* (Venice, 1566).



PART ONE



Sensation in  
Renaissance Mental  
Imagery



3 Anatomical cut of the head from Albertus Magnus, *Philosophia pauperum* (Brixen, 1490).

# I

## The Scientific and Artistic Traditions



During the period ranging from the later Middle Ages to the end of the seventeenth century Europeans believed that their heads contained three ventricles (illus. 3). In these, they were told, their faculties processed, circulated and stored the sensory data by means of which they could apprehend and understand the outside world. Aristotelian philosophy served as the operating system of this hybrid construction, Galenic anatomy as the hardware and the Hippocratic theory of blood spirits and humours as the data transmitter. This system attributed a central place to images in thought processes and consequently had a considerable impact on the visual arts. The active life of this early modern account of the mind spans the period from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century. It coincides with a rise in the status and importance of images and image makers unprecedented in any other society.<sup>1</sup>

In this introductory chapter I will briefly outline the nature, properties and status of the early modern system of the mind and delineate the ways in which it has affected views about the creation, meaning and reception of early modern images.

### History and configuration

In his influential treatise *On the Soul* Aristotle (384–322 BCE) provided a model of sensory perception and cognition, but one that placed consciousness and volition in the chest and around the heart rather than in the head. For Aristotle the brain was no

more than a cooling system.<sup>2</sup> Indeed one feature of the transition from the Ancient to the early medieval European world is the upward migration of the assumed seat of consciousness from the region of the heart to that of the brain.<sup>3</sup> Thus a civilization localizing the self in the head succeeded to one placing the self in the chest.

By the time of the Greco-Roman physician Galen (c. 130–210 CE) the rational soul had established its quarters in the head for all centuries to come. Following the works of the Alexandrian medical school, Galen divided the brain into a set of connected ventricles where he located the rational soul.<sup>4</sup> He asserted and imposed the idea that all the organs of the senses connect to the brain by means of nerves. It can be said of Galen that he wired sensation to reason.

While the Church Fathers accepted the Galenic model and developed a philosophy of the mind integrating several Aristotelian features,<sup>5</sup> the full impact of Aristotle's psychology had to wait until the twelfth century. From this period the treatise *On the Soul* and the *Parva naturalia* (sometimes referred to as the 'Sheet Physical Treatises') spread to the Latin West through a wave of translations which received further authority through commentaries, most notably those of Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274) and Albertus Magnus (c. 1193/1206–1280), all uninterruptedly copied, edited and printed until the seventeenth century as part of the curriculum of European universities.<sup>6</sup> University demand prompted a steady flow of Aristotelian manuscripts and texts that by the end of the fifteenth century were augmented by humanist editions.<sup>7</sup>

Early modern Aristotelianism is a field of plurality rather than doctrinal unity – scholars now speak of Renaissance *Aristotelianisms* for there is little in the Aristotelian corpus that did not become the subject of dispute and controversy.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, while Christian commentators experienced difficulties with Aristotle's views on the eternity of the world and implicit belief in the mortality of the soul, they received his account of the faculties of the sensitive soul – common sense, imagination, estimation and memory – without any serious controversy and



accommodated it in the already familiar Galenic anatomy of the head.<sup>9</sup> This produced a simplified Aristotelian psychology, which eventually collapsed in the seventeenth century under the philosophical assaults of Descartes and the observations of Thomas Willis's *Anatomy of the Brain* (1664).

This broad and blunt historical sketch highlights one central point: for over four hundred years Aristotle's account of the sensitive soul was the only available cognitive model in the West. Its emphasis on images necessarily had an impact on the visual arts. We are not dealing, however, with the influence of a text over artists but rather with a phenomenon: regardless of whether every early modern European had read Aristotle, or his commentators in Greek, Latin or vernacular, all disciplines dealing with mental imagery and its depiction used the Aristotelian conception of the mind as a point of reference.

### The Aristotelian mind in action

The Aristotelian mind needs sensation to apprehend the world – it would otherwise remain a *tabula rasa*. It does not really think through single sensations, however, but through images resulting from multiple sensory impressions. Aristotle designated this class of mental images common sensibles and hypothesized the existence of the 'common sense' to handle them.<sup>10</sup> Thus from multiple sensory impressions the common sense generates images corresponding to the categories of figure, size, number, movement and rest.<sup>11</sup> These are the constituent parts of mental imagery and the building blocks of early modern thought. The treatise *On the Soul* is seldom illustrated but frequently augmented with a summary invariably localizing each faculty – common sense, imagination, estimative and memory – in the ventricles of the brain.<sup>12</sup> Thus the faculties of Aristotelian psychology are disposed in a map of the brain imposed by Galen five centuries after Aristotle.

Scientific illustrations of this system frequently display lines linking the sense organs to the front ventricle traditionally housing the common sense (illus. 4). After merging into mental images this



4 Anatomical cut of the head from Lodovico Dolce, *Dialogo . . . nel quale si ragiona del modo di accrescere e conseruar la memoria* (Venice, 1562)

external data passes to the *fantasia* and imagination, which hold them for examination by the estimative powers, which modern cognitive science would associate with recognition. Such images are also the means by which the higher faculties of the rational soul acquire knowledge of the world. Once examined, inner images are stored in the memory, located in the third ventricle at the back of the head.

Such representations appear in a wide range of publications: treatises on the soul, of course, but also popular encyclopaedias, vernacular literature, treatises on improving one's memory.<sup>13</sup> The variations across time of these images of the mind enhance the contrast between their stylistic variety, from amateur to

professional, from medieval to Baroque, and the unity of their message conveying the very same ideas about the contents and functioning of the head.

Leonardo's version, in a drawing now at Windsor Castle (illus. 5), illustrates the overwhelming importance of this system of belief on the perception of reality. In spite of the fact that he practised anatomy himself Leonardo drew the ventricles of the brain from the side, as well as from above, as if they had really existed. In doing so he followed a mainstream tradition of scientific illustrations, as much a deeply embedded system of belief, of which the sixteenth-century physician Alessandro Benedetti provides a concise résumé in an anatomical treatise of 1543:

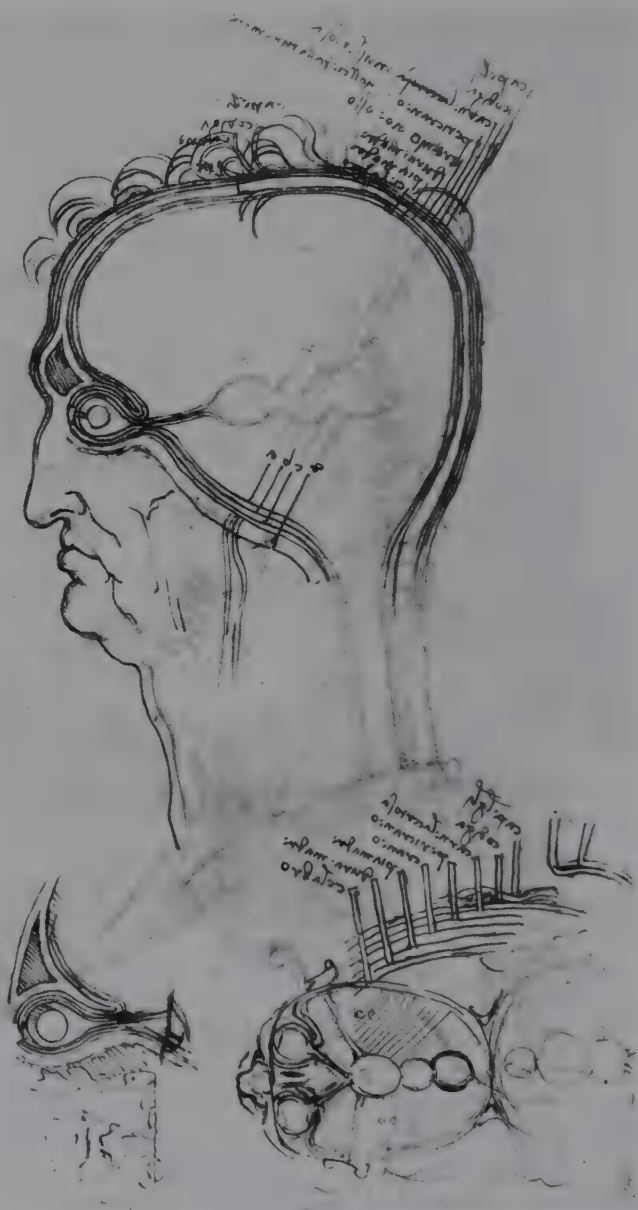
In these cavities are contained the faculties of the most noble senses from which is drawn the strength of reasoning, judgment and understanding; there the so-called common sense collects the species of sensitive things; there are formed the most varied images and this is where the senses of sight, hearing, smell and the other senses converge through the nerves or the membranes.<sup>14</sup>

Let us now examine the ways in which this theory affected medieval and early modern ideas on art.

### Church doctrine, images and the Aristotelian soul

By tracing a path running from the outside world to the inner recesses of the soul Aristotelian philosophy provided a scientific foundation for all disciplines, religious and secular, aiming at training the mind. It is indeed no coincidence that the medieval Church, the very same institution that, after some initial hesitations, promoted the translations and commentaries of the Aristotelian corpus, happened to be the most important commissioner and consumer of images.

Before the twelfth century the Church had a theory of images in place initially enunciated by Pope Gregory the Great (540–604)



5 After Leonardo da Vinci, *Anatomical Cut of the Head*, c. 1490–93, pen-and-ink drawing.

and further elaborated by John of Damascus during the Byzantine iconoclastic crisis (721–843). In the twelfth century the insertion of John's views on images into the *Sententiae* of Peter Lombard (1095–1160), the standard theological textbook of the Middle Ages, ensured their extensive dissemination in the West. By the twelfth century the basic doctrine of the Church had thus taken shape. It is enunciated for instance in Thomas Aquinas' commentary on the *Sententiae*:

There were three reasons for setting up images in the Church. First for the instruction of the illiterate, so that they can be educated as if they were reading books; secondly so that the mysteries of the incarnation and the examples of the saints stay better in the memory by means of being daily represented to the eyes. Thirdly in order to inspire some devout emotions which are better prompted by means of sight rather than by means of hearing.<sup>15</sup>

Thus religious images had to fulfil three functions: pedagogic, mnemonic and inspirational. These clearly resemble the faculties of the soul as defined by Augustine: intellect, will and memory. The emergence of the Aristotelian sensitive soul as the point of entry and processing of images in the mind did however blend with this theory. It provided a scientific definition of imagining taken up and developed by the various meditation and visualization techniques promoted from the twelfth century and later relayed by Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* (1541). As we shall see in the next chapter the increasing emphasis on the humanity and sufferings of Christ that characterizes late medieval and Renaissance religion bred meditative practices often prompted by the imagination and representation of tactile sensations.

## The humanistic theory of art

The Aristotelian theory of the mind also underpins the claim of Renaissance artists to the status of intellectuals. The foundation of their discourse is the notion that the visual arts reproduce images built in the artist's mind that can exist independently of their visible representation.

The localization of image-making in the ventricle of the soul and the implication that thought proceeds by means of images meant that artists could see themselves as thinkers rather than makers. Thus by the middle of the sixteenth century the Venetian painter Paolo Pino could repeat after Leonardo that painters are accomplished without having to work manually.<sup>16</sup> In this he was following a fairly recent tradition that would eventually consecrate the status of the artist as visualizer and intellectual.<sup>17</sup> The presence of painters and sculptors in modern universities – an inconceivable feat by medieval and Renaissance standards – takes root in these aspirations.<sup>18</sup>

The emphasis on composing images in the mind before representing them eventually produced a hierarchy of pictorial genres formulated in France in the 1660s but already present and implicit since the Renaissance.<sup>19</sup> Genres requiring mental reconstructions of events – such as sacred and profane history – featured at the apex of the hierarchy while still-life, landscape and portrait were considered lower genres since they only required direct transcription from the visible.

The conceptual foundation of this theory is the doctrine of *Idea*, a passepartout concept that essentially states the independence of the image in the artist's mind from any material support.<sup>20</sup> This intellectualization of art has led scholars to overlook the fact that for sixteenth-century artists and their audience the mind handles images as representations of 'common sensibles' rather than purely intellectual entities.

Even if these views, so common in the Renaissance, hardly correspond to the reality of artistic practice – surely based on a dynamic interaction between subject, medium and artist – Renaissance image makers did theorize their art as representation

of mental imagery. Furthermore a brief enquiry into the assumed nature of Renaissance mental imagery highlights its propensity to use the representation of multiple sensations. This would recommend late medieval and Renaissance visual and material cultures as particularly fruitful fields of investigation into the ways in which early modern Europeans represented and codified their sensory relationship to the world.



# Imprese – Mnemonics

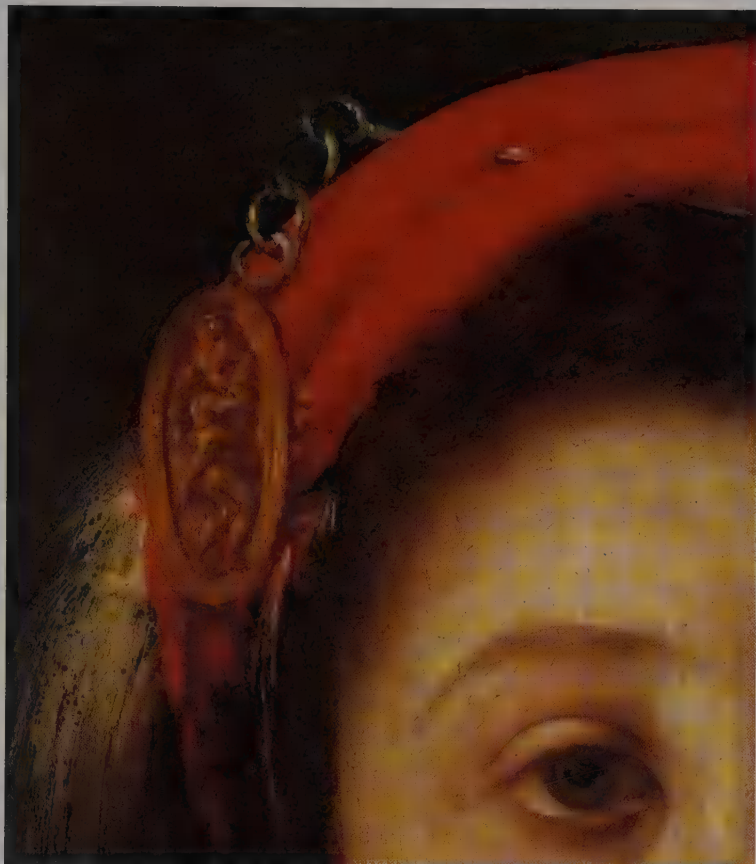
## – Meditation



This chapter presents four brief case studies that examine samples of applications of the Aristotelian theory of the mind in Renaissance culture. My focus here is on the presence of non-visual sensations in representations of image-based thinking. For this purpose I have selected samples in elite and popular culture, from personal iconography to repetitive religious imagery and imaginative practices. I begin with the *impresa*, a class of images often worn on the head and defined as a visible expression of thought. I then move to the art of memory, a technique used since Antiquity to build and manipulate multi-sensory mental images. The next two sections examine applications of mnemonics in the religious field, first through practices of visualization broadcast by meditation handbooks and second through a particularly common devotional practice, the Rosary, which combines the methods of Classical mnemonics with the central ability of the Aristotelian mind to imagine intense sensations. All these documents tell us about the mental imagery which the visual arts were often simultaneously illustrating and supporting.

### Images on the head

During the Renaissance the rich and powerful sometimes wore personal devices on their heads to signify their thoughts or to express their aspirations or passions.<sup>1</sup> This class of image, the *impresa*, is a compound of text and image and the word initially signified *enterprise*, *project*, *aspiration*. As an emblematic device a good



6 Detail from Jacopo Pontormo, *Portrait of a Halberdier*, c. 1529–30, oil (or oil and tempera) on panel transferred to canvas.

*impresa* should be neither too obscure nor too obvious, it should look good and preferably avoid the human figure, the latter a rule frequently transgressed.<sup>2</sup> Some *impresa* can be text without image and sometimes even images without text, as in Pontormo's mysterious halberdier (illus. 6).<sup>3</sup>

*Imprese* had Classical antecedents and medieval origins in tournament culture where the armoured participants displayed signs, colours and images expressive of their identity and intentions.<sup>4</sup> In the fifteenth century *impresa* began appearing as hat jewels,

under the name of *enseignes*, and penetrated Italy affixed to the headdresses of the military captains of the French kings Charles VIII (1470–1498) and Louis XII (1462–1515). While *imprese* were in fact already known in the peninsula, the Italic nobility adopted the fashion of wearing *enseignes*, as confirmed by many surviving portraits, hat jewels, plaquettes and medals.<sup>5</sup>

The fashion of wearing *imprese* on hats fades towards the end of the sixteenth century with the advent of the Counter Reformation. Nevertheless the genre continued its life well into the eighteenth century. Religious authorities adapted its concise image/motto formula to convey doctrine and the Jesuits even taught the art of composing *imprese* to exercise the wit of their students.<sup>6</sup>

In the political sphere *imprese* feature frequently in pageants and festivals, on triumphal arches and even on banqueting tables, where they convey striking messages to select audiences.<sup>7</sup> *Rolo, overo cento Imprese de gl'illustri Sigri. huomini d'arme sanesi* (Bologna, 1591), for instance, provides a fine example of how one hundred Sienese nobles expressed their allegiance to the Grand Duke of Tuscany showing 'the lively images of their soul towards the Prince' by means of one hundred *imprese*.<sup>8</sup> Seen by many, analysed and discussed by some and worn only by a few, *imprese* prompted intellectual attentions ranging from parlour games to philosophical discussions and heralded endless courtly praises of their powerful bearers.<sup>9</sup> While this literature, inaugurated by Paolo Giovio's *Dialogo dell'Imprese militari e amorose* (Florence, 1555), includes some treatises without illustrations, the main compilations, such as those of Ruscelli, Camilli or Capaccio, count amongst the finest illustrated books of their time.<sup>10</sup>

Most *imprese* were invented by men of letters who in turn adopted the fashion of their masters. Thus Renaissance literary academies used *imprese* as playful and didactic means of expressing their identity and displaying their wit and erudition.<sup>11</sup> They also produced an important body of theoretical literature discussing the origins, properties, function and functioning of *imprese*.<sup>12</sup>

Since an *impresa* is 'the portrait of a concept that its author has drawn with the brush of his imagination',<sup>13</sup> it is indeed a

representation of personal mental imagery. In Renaissance portraiture *imprese* affixed to hats are like windows on the soul, another way for painters of showing their sitter's thoughts. Such a conjunction of fashion and anatomy occurs in Albrecht Dürer's portrait of his friend the humanist Willibald Pirckheimer, which illustrates a treatise on the tripartite soul (illus. 7). The upper part of the head looks very much like a hat on which the letter 'A' holds the double identity of Dürer's familiar monogram and of the symbol of the entire brain (*cerebrum per totum*). Each ventricle is displayed like a badge on the borders of a hat.

# Caput phisicum



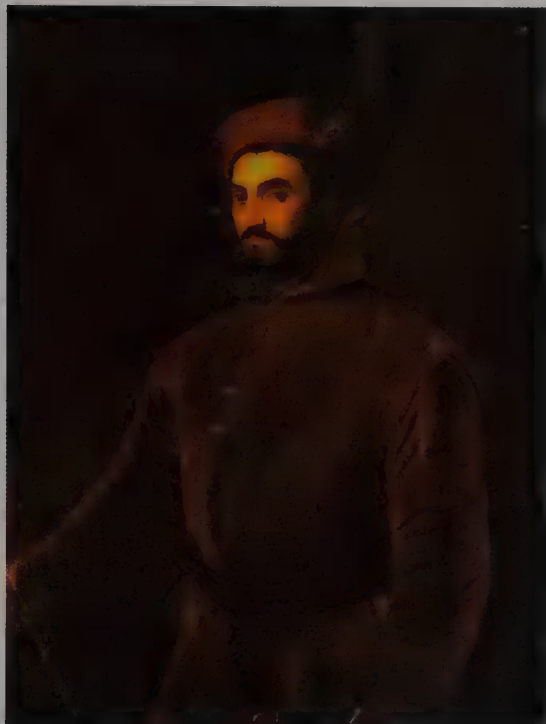
**A**  
 Cerebrum  
 per totum  
**B**  
 Sensus cōis  
**C**  
 imaginatio  
**D**  
 Fantasia  
**E**  
 Estimativus  
**F**  
 Memoria

7 Albrecht Dürer, Willibald Pirckheimer as an Anatomical Cut of the Head, 1498, woodcut.



8 Detail from Titian's *Ippolito de' Medici*.

9 Titian, *Ippolito de' Medici*, 1533, oil on canvas.



A brief glance at two well-known compilations of *imprese*, Paolo Giovio's *Sententiose Imprese* (1571) and Girolamo Ruscelli's *Imprese illustri* (1558), reveals striking samples of the kind of sensory imagery that once featured on the borders of Renaissance headdresses, more or less where Dürer indicated the chambers of the mind.

Such chambers can hold infinite space, as confirmed by Titian's portrait of Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici wearing on his hat an *impresa* where a comet crosses a starry sky (illus. 8). Thanks to Giovio's commentary we know that this *impresa* represents the star Giulia in reference to a passage of Horace and to Giulia Gonzaga for whom the young cardinal had a passion (illus. 10). The motto, *Inter omnes*, makes explicit that she shines above all others. Such figurative thought explains and enhances the depiction of Ippolito's melancholic expression.<sup>14</sup>





10 Impresa of Ippolito de' Medici from Paolo Giovio, *Le sententiose imprese di monsignor Paolo Giovio et del signor Gabriel Symeoní, ridotte in rima per il detto Symeoní* (Lyon, 1562).



11 Impresa of Emperor Augustus, from Paolo Giovio, *Le sententiose imprese...* (Lyon, 1562).





12 *Impresa* from Paolo Giovio, *Le sententiose imprese*... (Lyon, 1562).

While ethereal spaces feature occasionally on *impresa* many took their meaning from concrete tactile sensations. The second plate of Giovio's compilation represents a vivid contrast of strength and fragile restrained agitation in the *impresa* of Emperor Augustus: a crab with hairy spiky legs holding in its enormous claws the wings of a squinting butterfly (illus. 11).<sup>15</sup> Blows, bites, pinching, stinging are most common: an anonymous *impresa* shows one man hitting a masked figure on the head with a stick.<sup>16</sup> A she-snake bites her male partner, or a large winged snake with a hyena head bites an elephant near the genitalia while on the lower ornamental border a winged putto pinches the nipple of a smiling Venus with one hand and holds a flaming heart with the other.<sup>17</sup> The *impresa* of King Louis XII displays a porcupine with long pointed quills; the commentary emphasizes that the King, like the spiky animal, can sting at close or long range.<sup>18</sup> Physical damage by fire is also common: an anonymous *impresa* features a butterfly about to reach the flame of a candle.<sup>19</sup> The next *impresa*



13 *Impresa* of Cardinal Gonzaga, from Paolo Giovio, *Le sententiose imprese* . . . (Lyon, 1562).

moralizes around the figure of a soldier in classical armour who hits burning coals with his sword and gets blinded by the sparks (illus. 12).<sup>20</sup> That of Prospero Colonna represents the brazen bull inside which criminals were slowly burnt alive. Indeed flames and burning are particularly common.<sup>21</sup>

Sonic allusions are not infrequent. The *impresa* of Cardinal Gonzaga shows a weeping crocodile with a moral alluding to the fact that this animal devours those who listen to its wailing (illus. 13) while that of Francesco di Candia presents a thunderbolt striking a mountain.<sup>22</sup> Allusions to disruptive sounds appear frequently in the ornamental borders. In Ruscelli's *impresa*, for instance, two putti blow a horn in the muffed ears of a mask and pull the ears of a caryatid with their free hands.<sup>23</sup>

Olfactive allusions are less common but nevertheless present, for instance in the *impresa* of the Count of Santa Fiore where a motto alluding to the longevity of the fragrance of fruits picked by the hand of Hercules surrounds some pears (illus. 14).<sup>24</sup>

Elsewhere, commenting on an *impresa* featuring a rose surrounded by two stems of onions with the motto *Per opposita* ('through opposites'), Ruscelli explains that roses growing in such adverse olfactive conditions tend to produce an even sweeter perfume. This natural phenomenon serves as the basis of praise of the bearer whose virtue shone in adversity (illus. 15).<sup>25</sup> Even less frequent are gustative allusions, though the *impresa* of Girolamo Mattei displays an ostrich eating a nail.<sup>26</sup>

The two types of imagery present in *impresa* literature, *imprese* themselves and the profuse and lively ornamentation characteristic of early modern luxury goods, merge in the Renaissance parade helmet. A set of parade burgonets executed by the Milanese armourer Filippo Negroli in 1545 for Emperor Charles V stands out as a remarkable example (illus. 16). It represents a figure identified as a cuirassed Turkish prisoner held at each side of his long and curly moustache by personifications of Victory and Fame. The gold-damascened inscription underneath reads:



14 *Impresa* of the Count of Santa Fiore, from Paolo Giovio, *Le sententiose imprese* . . . (Lyon, 1562).



15 *Imprese* of Galeazzo Fregoso, from Girolamo Ruscelli, *Le imprese illustri* (Venice, 1566).

SIC.TVA.INVICT<sup>E</sup>.CAESAR ('thus through thee Caesar is undefeated'),<sup>27</sup> a motto probably alluding to the victorious campaigns of Charles's army against the Turks, outside Vienna (1529) and in Tunis (1535), which he considered steps towards conquering the Muslim world.

Such images required a metaphorical understanding of the sensation they represented, rather than the precise imagination of the discomfort of sporting long moustaches and being held firmly by their extremities by two winged matrons. The point nevertheless remains that ideas expressed by *imprese* are often mediated by the evocation of non-visual sensations. Furthermore, the tendency of the *impresa* to represent the moment of the formation and apprehension of an idea sets it in a particular time sequence. It may be described as a loop, an image in perpetual motion with a limited range of movements and a single meaning. Far from isolating the *impresa* from other types of images, this





16 Filippo and Francesco Negroli, *Parade Burgonet of Emperor Charles v.*  
1545, steel and gold.

characteristic enhances its similarity with those conceived and constructed by the medieval and Renaissance arts of memory to which we shall now turn.

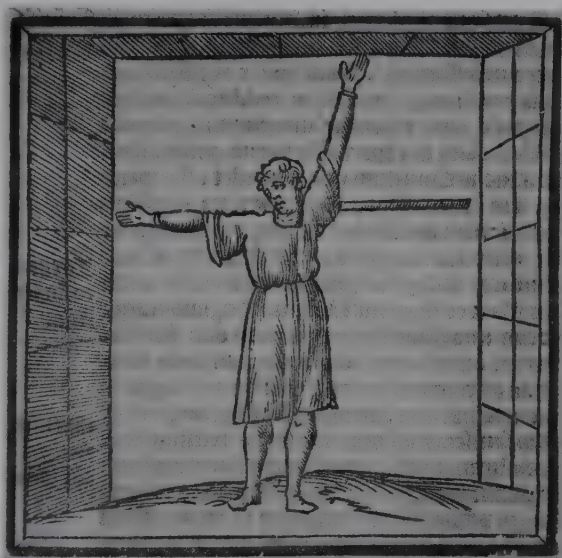
## Mnemonics and meditation

### *The art of memory*

During the millennia preceding the age of printing, when the media of the text were fragile, bulky and costly, human memory received intense training to retain and carry knowledge. With the advent of printing from the mid-fifteenth century onwards the demand for mnemotechnique decreased steadily. The elderly discipline nevertheless survived in two spheres: philosophy and religion. In philosophy the Classical art of memory inspired aspects of the image-based thinking elaborated by towering figures such as Giulio Camillo del Minio (c. 1480–1544) and Giordano Bruno (1548–1600) and provided tools for organizing an ever-growing body of human knowledge.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, while books spread and multiplied, most of the European population remained illiterate. The art of memory was thus applied to educate and control the elites and the masses, a central concern of the Church particularly after the Reformation.

The invention of the Classical art of memory goes back to the most remote Antiquity. Nevertheless, in spite of its widespread practice, precepts and practical examples survived through only one text, from the first century BCE, the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium*.<sup>29</sup> The section on memory, addressed to lawyers who had to plead several cases each week, expounds a method of remembering these by condensing actors and accessories in striking animated scenes housed in the niches of an imaginary gallery. The first step is to set up these niches or places of memory (*loci*). They can be 'a house, an inter-columnar space, a recess, an arch, or the like'.<sup>30</sup> They should be arranged in series, and marked after every five by a specific sign. They should neither be too big nor too small. To clarify this aspect a sixteenth-century treatise shows a figure extending its arms to the borders of the side of the niche (illus. 17).<sup>31</sup>

17 Memory place  
from Lodovico  
Dolce, *Dialogo...*  
*nel quale si ragiona*  
*del modo di accrescere*  
*e conseruar la memo-*  
*ria* (Venice, 1562).



In these spaces the practitioner will compose and dispose images synthesizing the main features of the case he wishes to remember. The *Ad Herennium* cites the example of a man poisoned in front of many witnesses for a question of inheritance:

we shall in our first memory place form an image of the whole matter. We shall picture the man in question as lying ill in bed, if we know his person. If we do not know him, we shall yet take some one to be our invalid, but a man of the lowest class, so that he may come to mind at once. And we shall place the defendant at the bedside, holding in his right hand a cup, and in his left tablets, and on the fourth finger a ram's testicles. In this way we can record the man who was poisoned, the inheritance, and the witnesses. In like fashion we shall set the other counts of the charge in memory places successively, following their order, and whenever we wish to remember a point, by properly arranging the patterns of the places and carefully imprinting the images, we shall easily succeed in calling back to mind what we wish.<sup>32</sup>



Elaborating further on the images to be used, the anonymous author specifies that the figures should not be common, but on the contrary unusual, fierce, grotesque, or terrifying; they should be animated and their features should be either familiar or famous. Above all they should be striking:

as by introducing one stained with blood or soiled with mud or smeared with red paint, so that its form is more striking, or by assigning certain comic effects to our images, for that, too, will ensure our remembering them more readily.<sup>33</sup>

The profound and far-reaching implications of the extensive practice of the art of memory during the Middle Ages and Renaissance has received increasing scholarly attention,<sup>34</sup> but the broader application of Classical mnemonics to Renaissance and Baroque mainstream religious practices seems less explored, particularly south of the Alps.

#### *Mass mnemonics*

Late fifteenth-century mnemonic Bibles provide literal examples of mnemonic imagery. One type uses the symbols of each evangelist as the animated bearers of attributes evocative of an episode of the Gospel. Here, in a late fifteenth-century version, the eagle, symbol of the Evangelist John, holds in his lap, or perhaps in something best described as a kangaroo-like pouch, a naked couple expected to bring to mind the episode of the woman taken in adultery (John 7:53–8:11) (illus. 18). The skull alludes to the resurrection of Lazarus, the box of ointment to the Magdalene. The eye, at the junction of the eagle's legs, is a prompt for remembering the healing of the blind man and the stick, attached to the tail, a reminder of the parable of the Good Shepherd.<sup>35</sup> Such images, judged barbarous and portentous of unhealthy fantasies, eventually disappeared during the sixteenth century.<sup>36</sup> Their method of condensing one or several narratives by means of accessories is however at the root of mainstream European themes such as the Man of Sorrow



18 Mnemonic image of St John's Gospel, from the *Ars Memorandi* printed in 1502 by Thomas Anshelm at Pforzheim.

surrounded by instruments of the Passion.<sup>37</sup> But it is through an even more common devotion that the Classical art of memory pursued its history during the Renaissance and Baroque periods: the Rosary.

Lorenzo Lotto's *Madonna of the Rosary* of 1539, now kept at the Pinacoteca Civica, Cingoli in the Marche, appears to be a straightforward illustration of the precepts of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (illus. 19). Above the group surrounding the Virgin and Child the painter has depicted three rows of five mnemonic places – just as recommended in the *Ad Herennium*.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore the scenes follow a sequential order from top left to bottom right, corresponding to the life of the Virgin and of Christ – again in line



19 Lorenzo Lotto, *Madonna of the Rosary*, 1539, oil on canvas.

with the recommendations of the *Ad Herennium*. Lotto may well have known this text, which had circulated throughout the Middle Ages and still continued to be paraphrased by all subsequent mnemonic treatises. But, above all, he was illustrating a method of prayer, the Rosary, which had been first elaborated by the Carthusians and later perfected and broadcast by the Dominicans, the order that did most to preserve and develop Classical mnemonics.<sup>39</sup>

The word *Rosary* and its vernacular avatars — *Chapelet*, *Rosenkranz*, *Rosario* — designate a wreath or a hat made out of roses, sometimes used to crown images of the Virgin.<sup>40</sup> It is also a cycle of prayers containing 150 Ave Marias and fifteen Pater Nosters. These are divided into three groups of fifty Aves and five Paters (one for every ten Aves). Each group of ten is recited with a scene of the life of the Virgin and Christ in mind. These scenes, called *mysteries*, are disposed in three groups of five:

Incarnation: Visitation, Nativity, Presentation at the Temple, Christ found among the doctors  
 Passion: Agony in the Garden, Flagellation, Crowning of thorns, Carrying of the Cross, Crucifixion  
 Glorification: Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost,  
 Assumption, Glory of God and the Saints.

Elaborated in northern European monasteries of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Rosary began its European expansion in 1475 with the foundation in Cologne of the first of many confraternities of the Rosary.<sup>41</sup> The devotion disappeared in the north with the advent of the Reformation, but in Catholic lands the exponential multiplication of Rosary confraternities led to the foundation of a commission in 1593 and a Congregation in 1669, bureaucracies destined to coordinate the hundreds of confraternities reciting every week billions of Ave Marias and Pater Nosters under ecclesiastical supervision. Through this expansion of the Rosary the Catholic Church was also promoting specific methods of imagining lively meaningful scenes disposed in three sets of five memory places.



20 Five mysteries  
of the Rosary  
from *Unser lieben  
Frauen Psalter*  
(Ulm, 1492).

In this context Lotto's altarpiece is only one of the many variations on this remarkably simple adaptation of Classical mnemonics. Pictorial examples frequently include crowns, such as those of the early *Unser lieben Frauen Psalter* of 1492, which can be followed like some Monopoly board for the soul (illus. 20). One hundred years later in Jacopo Ligozzi's version the crown of prayers has become a crown of roses framing an image of the Virgin – in imitation of the real crowns that framed similar images (illus. 21).<sup>42</sup> While Lotto painted five roses around each medallion to allow the reciter's gaze to move twice around each image, Ligozzi has depicted sets of five roses between each of the fifteen bronze rings holding the crown

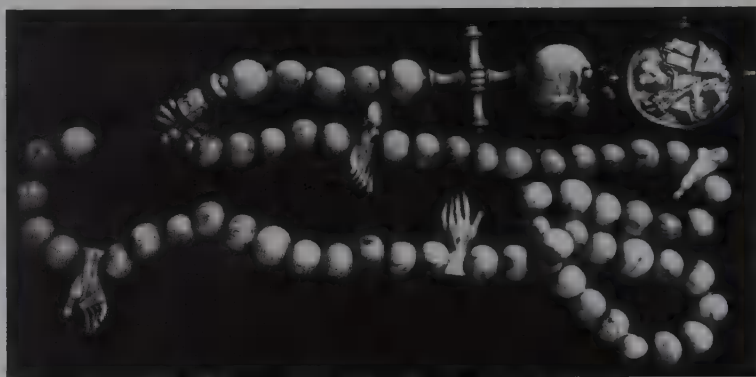




21 Jacopo Ligozzi, *Virgin of the Rosary*, 1603, oil on canvas.

and representing each of the fifteen mysteries. The tripartite division is also expressed by means of the white, red and pink colour of the roses.

Such images have the peculiar interest of representing the material and intellectual culture bred by this imaginative devotion. Let's now focus on these two aspects: first the sensory universe of the Rosary and second the origins, nature and function of the scenes depicted in its memory places.



22 Prayer Beads, Franciscan Crown, 17th century(?), ivory.

The material culture left by the Rosary pertains particularly to the senses of touch and smell. The first obvious level is that of the prayer beads which initially displayed two sets of tactile signs: ten identical small beads, one for each Ave, and a larger one for each Pater. Since all levels of society practised the Rosary, beads ranged from the most humble and scruffy religious paraphernalia to sophisticated jewels that could nevertheless be worn as signs of a pious mind. They not only include precious metals and stones but also images. These appear sometimes in medallions attached to the end of a set, but also as the Pater Noster beads. The Franciscan Rosary, which focuses on the wounds of Christ, brought further tactility to prayer beads (illus. 22). Individuals held these little objects between their fingers while reciting and contemplating. Somehow the imprint of the miniature tactile image on the fingertip – one of the highest zones of tactile receptivity – must have stimulated the imagination of those reciting. A late fifteenth-century engraving brings a floral dimension to the theme (illus. 23). There the Ave beads have become flowers, and the Pater bead is a flower holding a stigmatized limb in its corolla, its most pigmented and scented part. In a similar vein the illustrations to Alberto da Castello's *Rosario* assign memory places on the petals of a giant rose with a radiating image of the Virgin in its scented centre (illus. 24).



The idea of counting prayers with flowers relates to the role of scent in Rosary recitation. Lotto's *Madonna of the Rosary* highlights this aspect by showing putti throwing rose petals towards the viewer, thus establishing a zone of fictive visual and olfactive continuity between the space of the image and its surroundings.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, we know that luxury Rosary beads frequently included pomanders, a species of hollow jewels filled with scented matter.<sup>44</sup> At the lower end of the market compilations



23 Virgin of the Rosary, late 15th century, engraving, German, with top-left flowery surround above.



24 'The Glorious Mysteries', from Alberto da Castello, *Rosario della gloriosa vergine Maria* (Venice, 1524).

of domestic recipes circulating north and south provided instructions for making sweet scented rosaries.<sup>45</sup> One such domestic best-seller, the *Secreti* of Isabella Cortese – printed eleven times between 1561 and 1600 – offers recipes for preparing oils, toothpaste and soaps as well as paste to make perfumed Rosary beads. Signora Cortese adds that thanks to this paste it is possible to print any shape onto the beads.<sup>46</sup> Thanks to this mixture, incorporating amber, musk, styrax and rose water, these malleable beads received not only tactile shape but also shared several ingredients with church incense. In fact the reconstructions attempted by Reindert Falkenburgh in the late 1990s tended to smell like church interiors. In the intimacy of one's moist fingers

these modest beads would have thus released a scent lingering from hands to noses, reminiscent of the Virgin and the space of the church.

These aspects correspond to the three senses to which the rose is particularly significant: smell, touch and sight. Under the heading of smell its perfume, like incense, represents prayer rising towards the Virgin, as well as the Virgin herself.<sup>47</sup> Its three colours – pink, red and white – signify the three types of mysteries. As for touch, the spines of roses allude by analogy to the anguish of the Virgin during the Passion.

To all this should be added the perceptual continuity of the perfume, an olfactive parallel to the drone-like recitation of the prayer cycle, constituting the sensory ambience of the universe depicted by the iconography of the Rosary. The purpose of this mobilization of the senses is to stimulate concentration on a set of fifteen images represented as places of memory. Let us now concentrate on these scenes.

### The art of visualizing

The rise of the devotion to the Rosary comes with an accompanying literature frequently illustrated. Representative of the genre, and amongst the best-sellers of its time, stands Alberto da Castello's *Rosario della gloriosa Vergine*, published no less than eighteen times between 1520 and 1600. Castello presented the Rosary as a spiritual exercise and by doing so associated it with a long tradition beginning with St Paul's exhortation: 'Exercise yourself to piety'.<sup>48</sup> From about the twelfth century onwards the term refers to monastic activities related to prayer: reading, meditation and contemplation.<sup>49</sup> These do not always involve images but the increasing emphasis on the humanity of Christ in late medieval piety promoted exercises of mental visualization of the Gospel's narrative as a prelude to meditation proper.

Such exercises were broadcast to lay and monastic audiences in manuals such as Iohannes de Caulibus's *Meditatio Vitae Christi* (late thirteenth century), Heinrich Suso's *Horologium sapientiae* (1334) or Ludolph of Saxony's *Vita Christi* (c. 1374). This literature

pursued its active life throughout the age of printing. Vernacular translations of the *Meditatio Vitae Christi*, for instance, known through about two hundred manuscripts, were published 52 times in Italy alone between 1465 and 1550.<sup>50</sup> Such a production suggests not only the survival of medieval classics as best-sellers in the complex world of Renaissance religious literature, it also points to the continuity of medieval methods of imagining well into the sixteenth century.<sup>51</sup> These are indeed adapted and systematized by one of the most important meditation handbooks of the time, the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola (Rome, 1541), diffused and practised throughout Europe and its colonies as a result of the missionary zeal of the Jesuit order.<sup>52</sup>

Although Loyola's *Exercises* and Castello's *Rosario* addressed distinct provinces of spiritual life, they shared one thing: they trained their audience to compose intense mental images of Gospel scenes and to imagine themselves present. In this spirit Lorenzo Lotto sets a Renaissance lady reading a devotional book and imagining herself present at the scene of Christ taking leave from his mother (illus. 25). This literal representation of presence echoes similar requests in the *Meditaciones*. Their two poles are the Infancy of Christ and the Passion. The sections on the Infancy encourage the reader to imagine himself present and engaged in affectionate tactile interactions with the Child:

Kiss the beautiful little feet of the Infant Jesus who lies in the manger and beg his mother to offer to let you hold him a while. Pick him up and hold him in your arms. Gaze on his face with devotion and reverently kiss him and delight in him. You may freely do this . . . His benignity will patiently let himself be touched by you as you wish and will not attribute it to presumption but to great love.<sup>53</sup>

Spiritual exercises focused on the Passion also exploited the receptiveness of the mind to sensory impressions and its ability to represent them. Christ's humanity necessarily required a human sensory system without which the Passion would have been painless and therefore meaningless. Indeed, according to



25 Lorenzo Lotto, *Christ Taking Leave from his Mother*, 1521, oil on canvas.

Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend*, Christ had the most sensitive body and suffered intensely through each of his five senses.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, very much in line with the recommendations of the *Ad Herennium*, mental representations of the Passion narrative prompted the imagination of a human figure experiencing extreme pain. The prescriptions for imagining the crucifixion are particularly indicative of this approach. The *Meditaciones* describe two ways of visualizing the nailing on the cross: the first assumes that



the cross is already erected; the second supposes that it is on the ground and credits the executioners with a certain sense of symmetry. After having nailed the first arm they must pull and stretch the other to the opposite side of the cross using ropes. Thus the purpose is less to represent a historical event than to find the best method to impose upon the mind of the audience the image of a human figure stretched upon a cruciform frame. Christ's posture, the empathy with his figure, is in some way the expression of the violent infliction of the geometric symbol of the cross upon postural sensation.

Such iconographic inventions, absent from the Gospels, which are very succinct about the ordeal of the Passion, are the imaginative products of a religion increasingly focused on empathy with a human and suffering god. They are presented – and were probably devised – by the author of the *Meditaciones* as fulfilments of Old Testament passages.<sup>55</sup> In other words excerpts from the Old Testament were brought to fulfilment through the medieval imagination of the pains inflicted on Christ.

This very same violent tactile iconography features in the scented memory places of the Rosary. It comprises among others the 6,666 lashes received during the flagellation – an ordeal that no human body could survive. The episode of the crowning of thorns brings in observations on the thorns, which are said to have been very long, hard as iron and inserted in Christ's head as far as the brain, puncturing perhaps his inner faculties.<sup>56</sup> The episode of the spoliation brings in details about the removal of Christ's tunic – shortly before the nailing on the Cross – causing the tearing of remaining strips of his skin which had stuck to the cloth with clotted blood.<sup>57</sup> The mental images produced match in horror and intensity those recommended by the arts of memory. The Christ of the Passion may well be a visual image, but its contours are defined by extreme tactile violence.

Since medieval times this type of imaginative visualization had constituted the prelude to meditation proper. Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* systematized this technique by providing instructions on visualizing images through five sensory layers. This method, called the 'composition of place', is common to the mainstream



of European devotional literature which runs uninterrupted from the Middle Ages well into the Baroque period. Its focus on the eminently sensitive figure of Christ and its reliance on multi-sensory imagination should now provide a context for approaching Renaissance art theories and discussing the methods devised by artists for imagining and depicting the human figure.

## The Human Figure in Renaissance Art



How were Renaissance image makers trained to produce figures suitable to sustain the imagining practices we have examined so far? The first part of this chapter examines the principal method of construction of the human figure used in Renaissance workshops. The second part sets Renaissance ideas about art and imaginative devotion in the broader historical contexts of the Reformation and the Counter Reformation.

### Methods of construction

It seems that budding Italian artists were learning to draw sense organs as a first step towards producing lively images. Tuscan workshops used this method mentioned around 1565 by the painter Alessandro Allori (1535–1607) in his *Ragionamenti delle Regole del Disegno*.<sup>1</sup> We encounter further illustrations of this method in drawings by the Bolognese painter Francesco Cavazzoni (1559–1612) intended in all likelihood for the apprentices of the Carracci workshop and later engraved and published as the *Scuola perfetta per imparare il Disegno* (Rome, c. 1600).

The *Scuola* is a step-by-step method of drawing the human figure. The first sheets compile examples of eyes, ears, mouth, noses and feet depicted from various angles. Copying these seems a straightforward affair (illus. 26). Hands occupy the next four plates and require the more advanced understanding of what touches and what is touched. Plate 8 of the *Scuola* shows a handshake; two hands playing a spinet; another feeling with the thumb



26 Ears, noses, eyes and mouth from Annibale Carracci, *Scuola perfetta per imparare il disegno* (Rome, c. 1600).

the chin of a figure in relief on a medal; and finally a hand wiping with a cloth (illus. 27). The handshake involves representation of volume, pressure and skin contact, all essential ingredients of routine subjects such as the Madonna and Child. The playing hands require an understanding of the articulations and movements of the fingers; the hand with the medal illustrates the ability of the fingertip to feel and identify images in relief, which we have seen at work in the material culture of the Rosary. The hand holding a piece of fabric may serve as a preparation for devising figures holding draperies in subjects such as the Descent from the Cross or the Entombment, but it is also a tongue-in-cheek self-reference since it may well represent the hand of the



27 I hands, from *Scuola perfetta per imparare il disegno*.



28 Alessandro Allori, *Anatomical Study*, c. 1560, black chalk on paper.

engraver himself taking off the excess ink from the metal plaque before passing it under the press.

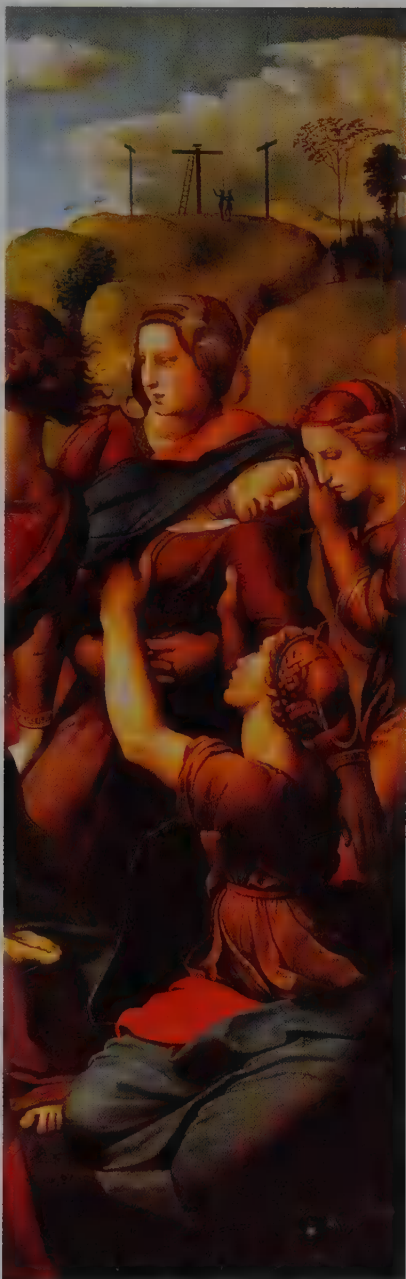
Eyes, nose, mouth, ears and hands are primarily means of representing distinct human features, but they are also the fictitious organs by means of which figures are represented interacting. One can observe another convergence between the rudiments of early



29 Raphael, *Study for the Virgin of 'The Entombment'*, 1507, pen and ink.



30 Raphael, *The Entombment*,  
1507, oil on panel.



modern figural representation and the medieval and Renaissance iconography of the five senses in which these five organs symbolize each sense.<sup>2</sup>

After the organs comes the body. Very much like the Christ of late medieval meditation literature, the human figure that Renaissance painters learned to imagine and depict is a sensitive animate entity made of imaginary bones, muscles and flesh. The earliest written accounts of this practice go back to the *Della Pittura* of the humanist Leon Battista Alberti (1436), the first modern theoretical text on painting. Here Alberti describes how to imagine the human figure, starting from its skeleton, gradually adding layers of muscles, skin and clothes.<sup>3</sup> A drawing by Alessandro Allori (illus. 28) illustrates this method, advocated by most Renaissance art treatises and applied by apprentices as well as professionals.<sup>4</sup> We see it at work in a preparatory sketch by Raphael for a Virgin of the Entombment (illus. 29). She has just collapsed in the lap of another figure who holds her with her arms around the waist. In the final composition (illus. 30) she is also touched by two other figures near the breast, under the armpits and on the head. Thus, here the anatomical under-drawing is an aid for resolving the complex question of representing the weight and relief of an unconscious body. For apprentices it is a means towards acquiring a fluent figural vocabulary. For this purpose, to quote Vasari, 'the best thing is to draw men and women from the nude and thus fix in the memory by constant exercise, the muscles of the torso, back, legs, arms and knees, and the bone underneath. Then one may be sure that through much study attitudes in any position can be drawn by help of the imagination without one's having the living forms in view.'<sup>5</sup>

The demands of late medieval religion, centred as it was on a suffering human god, undoubtedly inspired this emphasis on the human figure in art, but the impact spilled beyond the field of religion. Renaissance artists and their public increasingly considered the human figure the principal element of art and consequently the focal point for display and appreciation of artistic skill, regardless of the subject illustrated. Of this we find economic evidence in the fact that artists were often remunerated

according to the number of figures a picture contained. Similarly significant is the curious advice of the Venetian painter Paolo Pino who, in his *Dialogo di Pittura* (1548), enjoined his colleagues to include in their narrative composition 'at least one wholly mysterious figure, that is forced and difficult, in order to be recognized as a good painter by those who understand the perfection of this art'.<sup>6</sup>

This fondness for figures crops up over and over again throughout sixteenth-century artistic literature. It features prominently in the debates that opposed painters and sculptors in Florence and Venice in the 1540s. Sculptors insisted that carving a figure visible from eight different viewpoints demanded more thinking than producing one on a flat painting.<sup>7</sup> Painters responded that a good painting shows at once the various positions a single figure can take. This approach is extremely common in Renaissance art. It is quite conspicuous in Raphael's version of the *Massacre of the Innocents*, later engraved by Marcantonio Raimondi, which can be seen, at least partly, as a study of the movements and rotations of a single human figure (illus. 31).

Indeed, Michelangelo's immense fame as a painter and sculptor rested principally on his work on the human figure. For his friend and early biographer, Ascanio Condivi, the *Last Judgement* at



31 Marcantonio Raimondi, c. 1510, engraving after Raphael's *Massacre of the Innocents*.

the Sistine Chapel reveals all that nature can do with the human body, while the *Moses* at the Roman church of San Pietro in Vincoli stands out because 'beneath the beautiful robes covering [Moses], appears the nude; and the clothing in no way detracts from the beauty of the body; one sees this in all of [Michelangelo's] clothed figures, both painted and sculpted'.<sup>8</sup>

Anatomical studies prepared artists to absorb the works of Classical and modern masters in order to devise their own style. For this purpose a common method consisted in imagining figures in movement and animating those of others. Raphael is doing just this with Michelangelo's *David* in two sketches now in the British Museum (illus. 32). The first shows the *David* from the back. In the second Raphael has set the still sculpture in motion and deduced the movements of the hips, left leg and right arm (illus. 33).

To understand this type of imagery we need more than the image-in-the-mind approach to artistic creation.<sup>9</sup> Since the artist has within himself the anatomical body-image, it is likely that his relation to the figures he produces went beyond memory and visualization and extends to bodily experience and self-awareness.

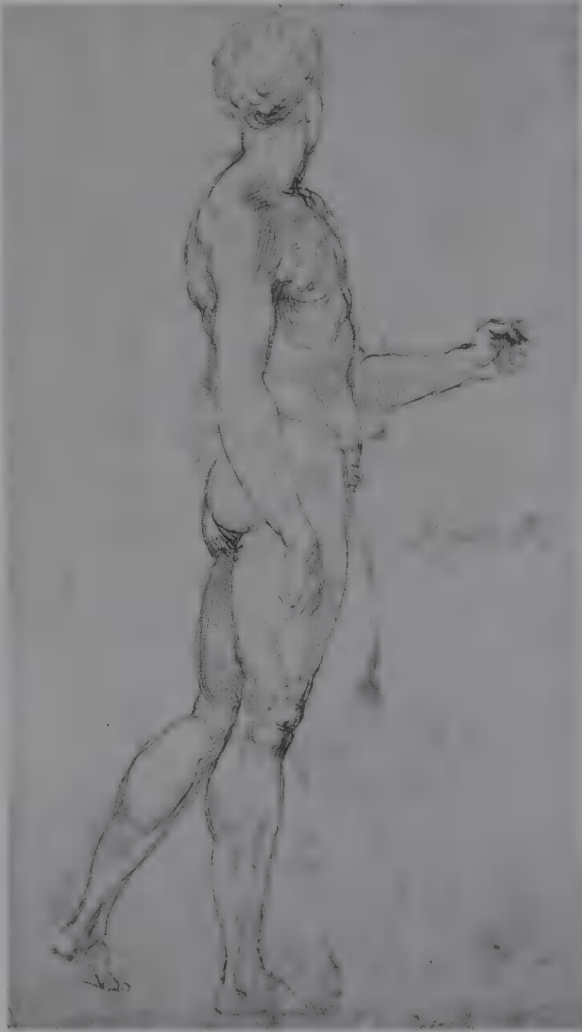
The application of the artist's own bodily awareness to representing the human figure is the subject of the *Capitolo del Pennello*, a playful fantasy about the brush's role as a generative organ, composed by the Florentine painter Agnolo Bronzino (1503–1572). The *Capitolo* begins with the encounter of an imaginary painting of undetermined subject: 'Recently I saw a beautiful depiction of a man and a woman: they were nude painted together in a pleasant (*piacevole*) act.'<sup>10</sup> Bronzino observes that the work contains all that one can acquire through study or by nature, and decides to write a piece in praise of the brush that produced it. The text goes on:

This one is shown on the bed or assumes a tired pose, erect or seated; this one holds something in his hand, that one hides it, this one wants to be seen behind someone; that one wants to be painted in front of someone; this one stands, that one seems to fall. I couldn't count the

32 Raphael,  
*Study of Michel-  
angelo's 'David'*,  
c. 1506–7,  
pen over chalk.



thousand and one acts and extravagant ways, but I know that variety pleases everyone. It's enough to do it facing or from behind, sideways, foreshortened or in perspective, the brush adapts to every position.



33 Raphael.  
*Study of Michel-  
angelo's 'David'.*  
c. 1506-7. pen.

In line with the conventions of burlesque poetry the poem is studded with double entendres and innuendos merging the art of making figures with that of making love in various positions, some acrobatic. Scholars have consequently identified the visual source of the *Capitolo* as *I Modi*, a set of prints made in the 1520s after the drawings of Giulio Romano illustrating licentious



sonnets by Pietro Aretino.<sup>11</sup> Their erotic character should not overshadow the fact that the *Capitolo del Pennello* is primarily grounded in the artistic culture common to Giulio and Bronzino. If anything it highlights the generic sensory character of the human figure in Renaissance art *before* it even receives its iconographic identity.

### Rituals of destruction

Thus the emphasis on visualizing and imagining characteristic of late medieval religion seems to have had some impact on the way artists learned their trade and approached the human figure as a sensitive animate entity. But by the sixteenth century the history of European art and religion had taken divergent paths. In the south, Italy witnessed the rediscovery of Classical art, the birth and expansion of art history, of artistic literature and of art academies. In stark contrast to these processes of absorption, glorification and discipline, north of the Alps and the Pyrenees most European countries withstood the biggest iconoclastic outbursts since the Byzantine era. The first waves originated in German and Swiss German territories between 1521 and 1537. By the 1540s Geneva had become the radiating centre of Calvinism. From there the second wave rolled over Europe peaking in the 1560s – especially in the Netherlands – and continuing up to the early seventeenth century.<sup>12</sup>

Mention of these events rarely features in accounts of Italian art. No mass iconoclasm ever took place in the Italic peninsula where, from the 1550s, the religious and secular authorities adopted a repressive policy against Reformist ideas.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, north of the Alps, in France alone, iconoclasts of all social classes removed and destroyed images from approximately 20,000 churches and 2,000 convents.<sup>14</sup> Such unprecedented challenges necessarily exercised some impact on the visual arts and the discourses surrounding them.

While Luther adopted a policy of tolerance and control towards images, the other Reformers thought that a full reformation of Christianity could only be achieved once images and their

satellite superstitions had been expelled from worship.<sup>15</sup> They based their views on Biblical and Patristic authorities as well as on their assessment of the idolatrous character of many late medieval practices. They insisted on the inability of images to convey a religion revealed by the word. Furthermore, some expressed discontent and concern with the art of their time, objecting to its increasing lack of clarity and to the tendency of giving Pagan features to Christian figures.<sup>16</sup> At the heart of Reformed iconoclasm, however, is another aspect, addressed with particular lucidity by Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt in his treatise *On the Removal of Images* (*Vom Abtuhung der Bilder*, 1522), the first iconoclastic tract of the sixteenth century. After listing the standard arguments against images, he adds:

I should not fear any image, just as I should not venerate any. But (I lament to God) from my youth onward my heart has been trained and grown up in the veneration and worship of pictures. And a harmful fear has been bred into me from which I would gladly deliver myself and cannot. As a consequence, I stand in fear that I might not be able to burn idols.<sup>17</sup>

Such fear might explain why so many iconoclastic deeds were aimed at exorcizing the belief that images are alive. Even if most Reformers advocated the peaceful removal of images, things often took place differently, eventually involving all layers of society. One of the most frequent types of assaults focused on the sense organs of images. Painted figures frequently had their eyes pierced; sculptures their heads, hands and arms cut off and broken.<sup>18</sup> Before performing disfigurement, dismemberment, beheading and destruction, iconoclasts frequently challenged images to defend themselves and submitted them to tortures and humiliations related to their specific subject. Crucifixes in particular underwent re-enactments of the Passion, were flagellated, mocked and attacked with spears.<sup>19</sup> Many remaining artefacts from France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, England and Germany show traces of these assaults.<sup>20</sup>

Thus while Italian artists began learning their trade by drawing sensory organs – as a first step towards depicting lively figures – northern iconoclasts attacked these to convince themselves of the lifelessness of images. The Reformers knew that medieval imaginative methods of worship, with their tendency to project life into images, had generated various idolatrous practices. In this respect they made the suppression of mental idolatry part of the image question. As a result the Reformation precipitated the demise of popular image-based mnemonics. One of the main channels of survival of the art of memory, the cult of the Rosary, also disappeared from Protestant piety, which did not recognize the Virgin as a particularly important figure and strongly disapproved of mechanical recitations. Their concern also led to the decline of mnemonic Bibles and of the *Vita Christi* tradition, which was replaced by vernacular translations of the Gospel.<sup>21</sup>

Reformist thought spread throughout Italy from the 1520s onwards, penetrating most layers of society.<sup>22</sup> A papal policy of intolerance towards Reform sympathizers, initiated from the 1550s, forced many Italians to either emigrate to Switzerland or risk considerable trouble at the hand of the authorities. At this time possession of works by Luther or Calvin could unleash a string of troubles, leading to the Inquisition's jails, interrogation chambers and eventually the stake. The Council of Trent (1545–64) only hardened the position of the Church against the Reformation. Its decrees on images deplored – and endeavoured to eradicate – idolatrous practices and to control images, but otherwise reaffirmed the main doctrine of the Church. This was far from the last word as the question of images inspired an important European body of literature lasting well into the seventeenth century.<sup>23</sup> The debate has little that is of stylistic relevance since it concerns the function, antiquity and use of images in places of cult, customarily fulfilled by works of various periods and styles. It produced however much prescription regarding the correct and supposedly accurate representation of each subject, particularly in Spain with the writings of Francisco Pacheco and in the Netherlands with those by Molanus.<sup>24</sup>

Things were quite different in Italy, which by the 1550s had already developed a secular literature on the visual arts, principally on painting. It included a handful of treatises, published mostly in Florence and Venice and geared towards the assessment and appreciation of painting, as well as the first monumental art history, the *Lives of the Artists* by the Tuscan painter Giorgio Vasari (1550 and 1568). Thus even if Catholic apologists based in Italy could not mention their northern opponents by name and needed special dispensation to read them, they could address the art of their time with the new sophisticated instruments and criteria of Renaissance art theories.

### Counter Reformation

The Reformers had lamented lack of clarity in modern art and the intrusion of Classical models into Christian subjects.<sup>25</sup> Catholic writers acknowledged these grievances but blamed the artists who, according to them, had neglected the function of religious art.

Whether human figures expressed the states of the soul, the positions of desire or the *Massacre of the Innocents*, their representation and appreciation seem to have grown with increasing indifference to their subject. In 1438 Alberti had already criticized, with Donatello in mind, those artists who gave their figures unnatural poses.<sup>26</sup> These criticisms resurfaced in the second half of the sixteenth century as one of the leitmotifs of the *Dialogo degli Errori e degli Abusi de' Pittori circa l'Istorie* (Camerino, 1564), the first vernacular text on painting printed after the Council of Trent, by the writer Giovan Andrea Gilio. 'When Modern painters have to execute some work', writes Gilio, 'their first concern is to twist the head, arms and legs of their figures so that it can be said that they are contorted, and these contortions are often such that it would be far better if they were absent and they have little or nothing to do with the subject of the story.'<sup>27</sup>

For Gilio the desire of painters to display their mastery of anatomy undermined the didactic, mnemonic and inspirational functions of religious art. Loyal to medieval Passion imagery, Gilio declares that in order to show the strength of their art, painters

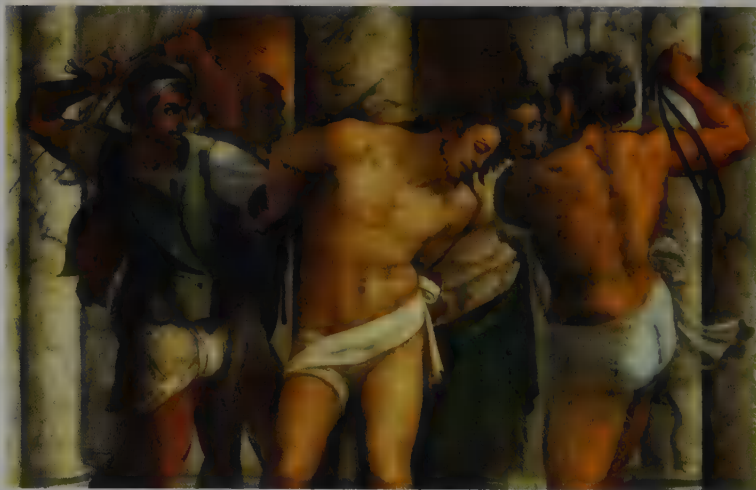
would do better to depict Christ suffering, bleeding, covered in spit, flayed, deformed, ugly and pale to the point of no longer having human form. He adds: 'I have often discussed this point with painters. They all responded to me with the same voice, saying that [such depictions] would go against the conventions of their art.'<sup>28</sup>

Northern art up to the Reformation produced many violent representations of the Christ of the Passion as Gilio would have wished to see them. He does not, however, specify which images should be imitated and provides no evidence that he knew anything about northern art. His evocation of the Christ of the Passion more probably derives from the medieval imagery of the *Vita Christi* tradition which continued to circulate during the sixteenth century. Unlike German and Flemish masters, Italian painters rarely represented much blood and wounds on the body of Christ. Gilio's observation that the *Flagellation* of Sebastiano del'Piombo seems to be carried out with soft cotton ropes and does not produce any pain or wounds applies to most Italian interpretations of the main episodes of the Passion (illus. 34).<sup>29</sup> Thus whether the painters whom Gilio interrogated are real or fictional, three centuries of Italian art confirm their reluctance to represent the violent imagery of the *Vita Christi*, while various other sources confirm that other writers shared Gilio's concerns.

The visual arts changed and adapted to the requirements of the Counter Reformation but the Christ of the Passion rarely took the appearance wished by Gilio. From the medieval to the Baroque periods, the Christ of the Flagellation and the Ecce Homo appear with little blood and hardly any wounds, but surely more expression and emotion. Devotional literature also moved towards much gentler ways of imagining. These are best exemplified by one of the seventeenth-century spiritual best-sellers, the *Introduction à la Vie dévote* of François de Sales (1609) in which the imagery of violence has been replaced by gentle metaphors. Charity is a milk of which devotion is the cream, or a balm of which devotion is the perfume. It shines like precious stones in honey. The Christ of the Passion is no longer a human-shaped wound but a bitter bread.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps the use of taste-based metaphors avoided the

issue of the graphic representation of pain. The only country where blood-soaked images of Christ continued to be produced as part of mainstream art was Spain (illus. 35). Such productions were however confined to polychrome sculpture, which remained the main channel of continuity for medieval imagery in the heart of Baroque sculpture. This is not to say that this imagery completely disappeared elsewhere. It survived for centuries on the margin of mainstream Christian art. Its most recent avatar is Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ*, which brings to the cinema screen an iconography originating from the medieval *Vita Christi* tradition rather than the Gospels. A significant indicator of a change of time and sensitivities is the fact that many Catholics, including the Archbishop of Paris, not only perceived the film as offensive but characterized it as 'medieval'.

A common narrative of present-day cultural studies is the rise of sight as a dominant sense in the Renaissance, and we may well want to interpret artistic dislike of medieval Passion imagery as one more symptom of this shift away from the sense of touch. The opposite might also be true. The long service of the visual arts to medieval Christianity has turned the human figure into such a sensitive entity that representing wounds upon its freshly painted



34 Sebastiano del Piombo, *Flagellation*, 1516–24, fresco.



35 Pedro de Mena, *Ecce Homo*, 1660, polychrome wood.



body could well have been a source of distaste and discomfort. This discomfort is only one of the facets of the sensitization of the figure of which we have seen other manifestations in the burlesque works of Bronzino, in art education as well as in northern iconoclastic assaults. As we shall now see, the senses of the human figure pursue their perceptive activities in the playful Renaissance art of ornamentation.

## Ornament



Renaissance audiences delighted at least as much in ornamentation as in narrative paintings. At the heart of this fondness is a fascination with the unpredictable movements and images of the imagination and the belief that ornament represents this phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> As representations of sensations are a constituent part of early modern mental imagery we would expect them to be particularly present in the field of ornamentation.

From the twelfth to the seventeenth century, ornamentation adapted to two major changes. The first change is one of medium: manuscript illumination, which for centuries had been the field for elaborating and disseminating a sophisticated ornamental language, eventually gave way to the printed illustrated book. The second change is the major stylistic revolution brought about by the rediscovery of Classical ornamentation that overtook Italy in the fifteenth century and promptly spread to the rest of Europe. *All'Antica* ornamentation circulated across the applied arts through sketchbooks, albums of drawings and prints, and model books. Medieval illuminations were devised for each unique page they decorated; Renaissance borders were not. Early modern printers frequently repeated the same set of woodcuts or copper plates cyclically throughout a single book and several editions. As a result, interaction between the ornamented margins and the centre is often the result of coincidental juxtapositions rather than premeditated elaborations.

Thus while the theory of perception and imagination remained stable throughout the medieval and Renaissance periods, the visual

language perceived as its closest representation changed considerably. Did the rediscovery of Classical art have much impact on the representation of sensation? As we shall see, Renaissance ornamentation provides many examples of medieval sensations in Classical dress. Sensory themes originating in post-Classical iconography are re-elaborated in the fantasy world of Renaissance *all'Antica* ornamentation.

From the beginning of the fifteenth century onwards the Classical style of ornamentation re-emerges in the visual arts of Italy. The interest in what has been called fantastic and animated ornamentation is already present and broadcast in northern Italy through the works of Pietro Lombardo (1435–1515), while in Florence leading artists such as Ghiberti, Donatello and Verrocchio treated and absorbed Classical ornamentation within their own sophisticated technical and formal vocabulary. Until the late fifteenth century the main sources were sarcophagi, vases and architectural fragments. In the early 1480s artistic thirst for Classical models found exponential and fertile relief in the discovery of the Domus Aurea, the palace of the Emperor Nero (CE 37–68). The ornamental stuccos and frescoes of its inner vaults promptly came to the attention of the leading painters who had been brought to Rome by Pope Sixtus IV to decorate the Sistine Chapel. Motifs found their way into sketchbooks and into the frescoes of Roman churches. Ridolfo Ghirlandaio, Filippino Lippi, Pinturicchio and Luca Signorelli assimilated the new ornamental style, which they disseminated through their public works in Roman churches and later in Tuscany and Umbria. By the late fifteenth century engraving began to broadcast this new repertoire, which underwent a renaissance under the talented and witty hands of Raphael and his studio, in particular Giulio Romano, Perino del Vaga and Giovanni da Udine. They produced canonical models in Rome, notably at the Villa Farnesina (1510–11), the Vatican Loggie (c. 1517) and the Stufetta (or bathroom) of Cardinal Bibbiena in the Vatican (1516). After Raphael's untimely death (1520) and the Sack of Rome (1527) these artists' departure from Rome further disseminated the new ornamental style. By the mid-sixteenth century *all'antica* ornament had

spread to the minor arts and extended its presence in the borders of most genres and media.

These ornaments were called *grottesche*, after the grottoes in which they had been rediscovered.<sup>2</sup> They matched the testimony of the Roman architect and theoretician Vitruvius, who disapproved of them but nevertheless provided an authoritative textual precedent confirming their spread and appreciation in the Classical world.<sup>3</sup> Writing from the angle of architecture and engineering, Vitruvius disliked these images showing impossibilities such as columns and temples supported by small and fragile hybrid animals. He compared them to those produced by the imagination during sleep and called them *dreams of painting*.<sup>4</sup> Renaissance writers did not share Vitruvius' dislike and enthusiastically picked up this last aspect. The Florentine writer Anton Francesco Doni (1513–1574), for example, described *grottesche* as castles in the air (*castelli in aria*) and chimera and associated them with figures projected by the imagination onto clouds, dust and dirty walls.<sup>5</sup> By the late sixteenth century the genre was well enough established to command an entire chapter of Giovan Paolo Lomazzo's *Trattato dell'Arte della Pittura* (Milan, 1584), of Giovan Battista Armenini's *De'veri Precetti della Pittura* (Ravenna, 1586) and of Federico Zuccaro's *Idea dei Pittori* (Turin, 1604), all of which associated ornamentation with the imagery of imagination.

Approached from the angle of the Aristotelian imagination, *grottesche* provide a plethora of playful allusions to multiple clusters of sensations, highlighting some continuity between medieval and Renaissance ornamentation despite clear stylistic differences. Such continuity appears in Filippino Lippi's decoration of the Carafa chapel at Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Rome (c. 1480), the first important public work to incorporate motifs exported from the Domus Aurea. The ornaments of the Carafa chapel already include the principal elements of the new repertoire of hybrid figures, made of geometric, vegetal, animal and human shapes. They feature on stripes framing the main images of each wall. On the right-hand wall the lower register of the *Triumph of Aquinas* displays some interaction between Classical and Christian art: while Aquinas disputes with some heretics, the creatures of the border



36 Filippino Lippi, *Thomas Aquinas Disputing with the Heretics*, c. 1480, detail from fresco, S. Maria sopra Minerva, Rome..

seem to amuse themselves at his expense. A sphinx is writing on Aquinas' back with an igneous pen and below a putto is blowing a horn in his lower back (illus. 36).

What at first sight looks like the joyous return of Classical art blasting on the backside of the most important medieval philosopher and commentator of Aristotle might just be the first episode of the continuation of a medieval joke in classical dress. This sonic farce could be called the inverted fart. It appears frequently in medieval marginalia where a figure blows a horn on the bottom of another, causing surprise and annoyance (illus. 37).<sup>6</sup> This theme continues its afterlife with further variations in the classically inspired borders of Renaissance printed books. We encounter it in Girolamo Ruscelli's *Imprese illustri* (p. 268), where tritons blow shells into the flower-shaped anal extremity of winged mermaids (illus. 38). The margins of a French edition of Lorenzo Spirito's fortune-telling book bring this motif into symmetry with its own contrary (illus. 39): a putto with butterfly wings blows a pump into the rectum of a hybrid plucked bird.<sup>7</sup> On the other side another putto presents a mask, the eyes of which seem about to be pierced by the long beak of a bird in full feather. Thus we can observe a set of oppositions between passive and

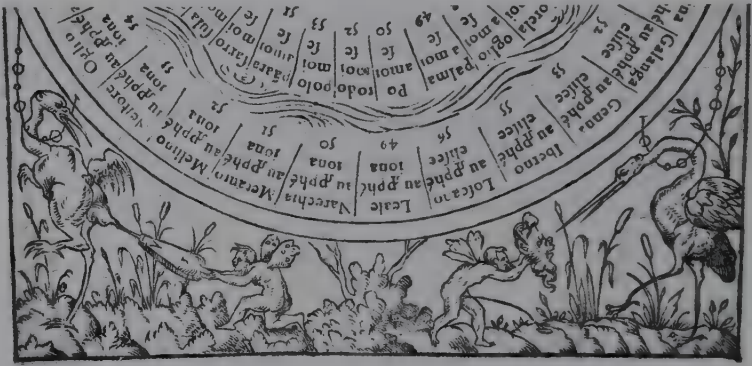


37 'Inverted Fart', from a 14th-century manuscript of *Lancelot du Lac*.





38 Ornamental detail from the *impresa* of Giorgio Costa from Girolamo Ruscelli, *Le imprese illustri* . . . (Venice, 1566).



39 Ornamental detail from Lorenzo Spirito, *Le passetemps de la fortune des deus: ingenieusement compilé par maistre Laurens l'Esprit* (Paris, 1559).

active, piercing and blowing, hollow and full, eye and rectum, feathered and plucked.

Sonic and tactile themes breed in this population of animated hybrids touching, and sometimes pinching and biting, one another. A plate of mediocre draughtsmanship by Nicoletto da Modena (c. 1506) stands out in the present context as an anthology where ornamentation has outgrown the narrative that describes some of the deeds of the god Apollo (illus. 40). Starting from the top, we find a sonic contrast between the harp of Apollo and the bagpipe of Marsyas.<sup>8</sup> The heels of the musicians are about to be bitten by tightrope-walking panthers. In the centre two equine heads sprouting from a vegetal outgrowth bite the horn of a bovine skull that has a snake running through its eye sockets. At the bottom we find more music and more sound from the screaming floral sprouts and tightrope-walking birds with open beaks.<sup>9</sup>

Many of the sensations experienced by ornamental figures have Christian rather than Classical precedents. A set of twenty ornamental prints of c. 1530, by the engraver Agostino Veneziano (c. 1490–c. 1540), provides some striking samples.<sup>10</sup> In one, a Diana of Ephesus with a castle above her head holds a lioness and a large bird on her open arms while a rooster is about to land on her hand and clinch her fingers with its claw (illus. 41).



40 Nicoletto da Modena, ornamental panel, c. 1507, engraving.

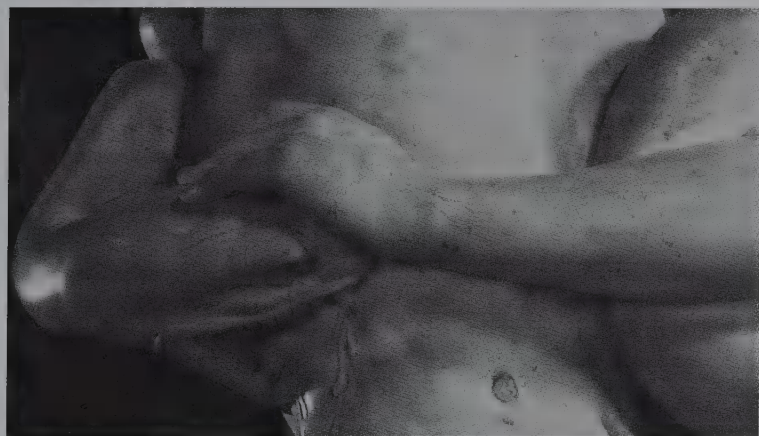


41 Agostino Veneziano, ornamental panel with a figure bearing a castle on her head, c. 1520, engraving.

The castle on the head is evocative of Vitruvius' description and condemnation of *grotesche* and anticipates their characterization as castles in the air. The more specific motif of the bird's claws and fingers is, as we will see in the following chapter, a frequent feature of allegories of the sense of touch and has its origin in Christian art.<sup>11</sup> In the same set two figures with human torso and chicken body warm themselves at the flames of an oil lamp, an allusion to the perception of hot and cold generated by the sense of touch and now called thermoception, of which we will also encounter examples in Christian iconography.<sup>12</sup>

Unlike Christian art, Classical art provided only a limited range of figures experiencing striking tactile sensations. One famous and influential exception is the *Laocoön* group rediscovered in 1506. This depiction of a man and his two sons being attacked by giant snakes had an immediate and durable impact on the figurative arts. The snake bite motif struck Renaissance artists to such an extent that copies, such as that of the Florentine sculptor Baccio Bandinelli, emphasized the teeth of the snake and added some drops of blood in relief around the open wound (illus. 42).<sup>13</sup> Undoubtedly the idea of a group of three figures seized by the venom of two large snakes had much to please the Renaissance





42 Baccio Bandinelli, *Laocoön*, 1525, marble, and detail of the left-hand boy's hand and a biting snake.

culture of the multi-sensory human figure. It also brought the theme of the snake bite to the sensory universe of ornamentation, as in Agostino Veneziano's burlesque print, where large snakes sprouting from the foliage beard of a giant head bite the arm and the bottom of two satyrs whose poses are variations on that of the Laocoön (illus. 43).

The rich borders of Ruscelli's book of *imprese* provide further examples of sensational ornaments. On page 180, for example, two caryatids hanging onto pairs of phallic courgettes frame the lunar *impresa* of King Henri II of France (illus. 44). The opening of their lower legs, with their long, black and narrow ovoid shape, invites associations with female genitalia. They sit on the curly heads of young men picking apples and presumably inhaling their perfume.<sup>14</sup> Around the *impresa* of Emperor Ferdinand (illus. 45), the viewer may imagine fruits and petals caressing the erogenous zones of a pair of *putti* in a fashion already established by Michelangelo's *Leda*. At the bottom of the frame two little angels press their back and bottom against the cheeks of a smiling mask, perhaps a humorous classicization of the iconography of the Virgin and Child rubbing against one another's cheeks.<sup>15</sup> Plays on taste are less frequent but still present. A common example, illustrated in Spirito's woodblocks, is that of a



43 Agostino Veneziano, ornamental panel, c. 1520, engraving.





44 Ornamental detail from the *impresa* of Henri II, King of France, from Girolamo Ruscelli, *Le Imprese illustri...* (Venice, 1566).

figure urinating in the mouth of a dragon, presumably extinguishing its fiery breath.

Recent scholarship has interpreted Renaissance *grotesche* in the context of Neo-Platonic ideas on the role of imagination in the



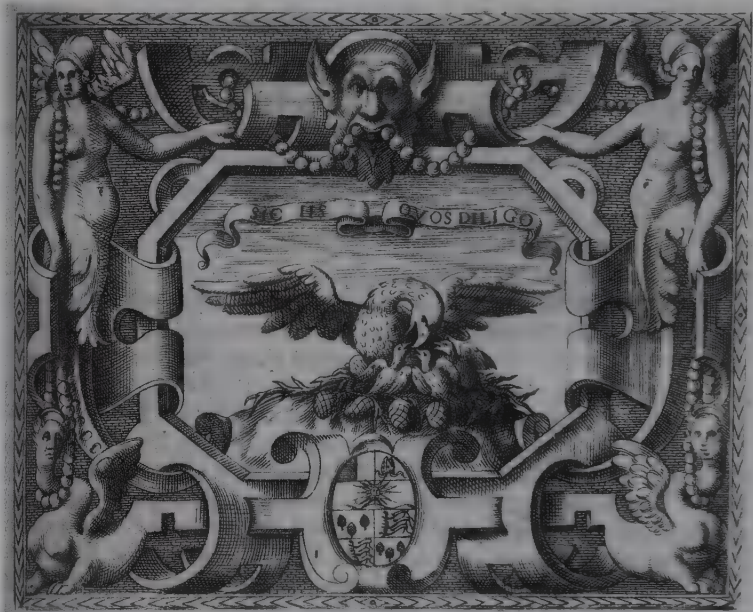
45 Ornamental detail from the *impresa* of Emperor Ferdinand, from Girolamo Ruscelli, *Le Imprese illustri...* (Venice, 1566).

ascension of the soul towards God.<sup>16</sup> There is however little evidence that *grottesche* intentionally catered for a Neo-Platonic use of images. The principal reason is that Neo-Platonism, in the wake of Marsilio Ficino's *De Amore* and its profound impact on sixteenth-century love literature, eulogized sight and hearing as the only senses capable of triggering a spiritual ascent.<sup>17</sup> Renaissance *grottesche*, as we have seen, addressed more than sight alone. Their combinations of human, animal and vegetal forms experiencing strange and unusual sensations, not to mention frequent obscene and scatological allusions, were unlikely to serve Neo-Platonic mystical aspirations.

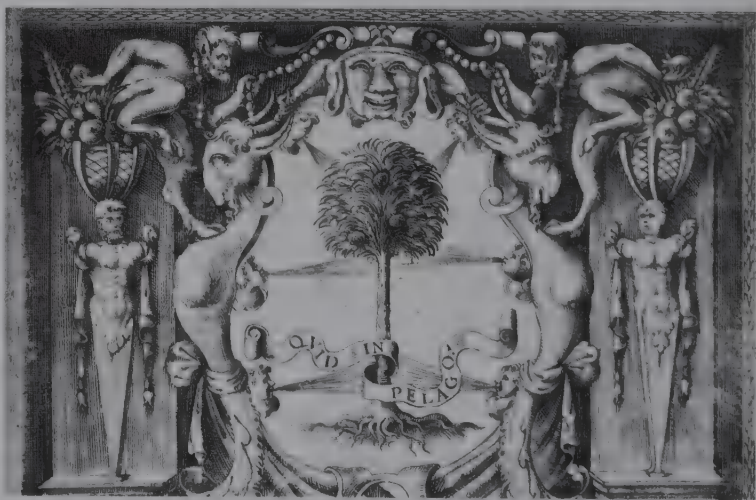
This is not to say that Renaissance ornamentations are meaningless. One art theorist, the painter Gian Paolo Lomazzo, even affirmed that the Ancients invented *grottesche* as enigmas, ciphers and hieroglyphics to signify some concept or some thought in the same way as Renaissance men do with emblems and *impresa*.<sup>18</sup> Given their playful multi-sensory language the thoughts expressed by *grottesche* would however be notoriously difficult to decipher and render verbally. But approaching Renaissance *grottesche* as playful multi-sensory images may uncover intentions other than ornamental.

In Ruscelli's excellent collection of *imprese* the inhabitants of twelve engraved borders share the framing with large rows of beads. This use of beads in ornamentation has as far as I know no Classical precedent. In the sixteenth-century context it is however evocative of the iconography of the Rosary, where rows of beads or garlands of flowers frame the image of each mystery.<sup>19</sup> In Ruscelli's *Imprese illustri*, large beads surround parts of the borders as accessories (p. 263). Two plates feature a large row of beads coming from the mouth of a mask with asses' ears (illus. 46).<sup>20</sup> The beads pass through the cartouches around the shoulders of two winged figures that are in turn holding another row looping around the neck of a chimera. A few plates later a string of beads hangs from the spiral-shaped ears of a mask while at the bottom, on both sides, a satyr and a cupid pull each end of another row of beads. Elsewhere one satyr feels a bead with his hand (p. 517). But best perhaps are the borders of Monsignor Maccasciola's *impresa* (illus. 47) where the engraver has placed two satyrs counting beads with one hand and with the other feeling a large fruit from the basket on which they sit. It is tempting to wonder whether this ornamental use of beads is not making fun of rosary recitation. The gesture of the satyrs is indeed very similar to that of counting prayers; the theme of beads coming out of the mouth of masks and hybrids could be a sarcastic adaptation of a foundation legend of the Rosary according to which roses fell out of the mouth of a particularly pious monk each time he recited an Ave Maria.<sup>21</sup> Similarly the asses' ears of the satyrs and asinine hybrids holding beads may well allude, in a Lutheran spirit, to the foolishness of hoping for salvation by means of repetitive recitation.

Ruscelli attached some importance to the ornamentation of the book. At the very end of the introduction he reminds his readers that the figures to be interpreted as *imprese* are only those in the centre of each plate, the rest is solely ornamental. It does not mean however that the ornamentation is devoid of interest, for he adds 'those who take pleasure in *disegno* and painting should take no small pleasure and usefulness since there is here such an abundance of ornaments, all different and very beautiful, thus



46 *Impresa* of Ottone Truchese from Girolamo Ruscelli, *Le imprese illustri* . . . (Venice, 1566).



47 *Impresa* of Monsignor Maccasciola, from Girolamo Ruscelli, *Le imprese illustri* . . . (Venice, 1566).



those who know best [these kind of things] will have more understanding and esteem [for this book]'.<sup>22</sup>

The association between connoisseurship of painting and appreciation of figural ornamentation is by now a familiar subject. Another engraving by the French artist Etienne Delaune centred on Venus and Cupid takes far fewer precautions (illus. 48). Its centrepiece is a Venus bitten by a snake and touched on her genitalia by Cupid. Above this group are five flowers arranged as medallions, reminiscent of the iconography of the Rosary. On the sides are flaming hearts and smoke and further in the borders long slugs licking the antennae of large snails. From each slug hangs rows of five beads, felt and counted by winged bearded figures with satyr legs. Could the implied viscosity of the beads allude to that of real Rosary beads made out of malleable scented paste?<sup>23</sup> The satyrs are farting five-pointed spikes onto a globe, thus standing as the antithesis of Rosary reciters whose prayers are customarily compared to the perfume of roses rising towards the Virgin.

There is no way to establish whether such interpretations unveil the initial intentions of the designers of these plates. Critics of the Church had to be particularly discreet in these repressive years which saw the advent of Nicodemism, a pan-European movement made up of those who believed in the Reformation but lived in Catholic territories and preferred conforming to the meaningless rituals of the Roman Catholic Church rather than risking their lives and reputations.<sup>24</sup> *Grottesche*, under the cover of their imaginative absurdity, could certainly have been a channel for expressing dissident ideas. But more interestingly for the subject of this book, although *grottesche* borrow many elements from Classical art they also carry many deriving from the sensory world of Christian iconography.

Scholarship on the European afterlife of Classical art has generally two broad chapters: the Middle Ages when content and form are separated and the Renaissance when they are reunited again.<sup>25</sup> The samples we have examined so far point to a slightly different scenario in which elements of medieval iconography and perceptual habits are shaping the reception of Classical art. This



48 Etienne Delaune (1518 -1583), *Venus and Cupid*, c. 1560, engraving.



is particularly conspicuous in ornamentation, which features many sensory allusions absent from pre-Christian ornament, but also applies to the reception of Classical figurative art as witnessed, for instance, by the sensationalization of the *Laocoön* in ornamental variations as well as in humanist descriptions.<sup>26</sup>

As we have seen, the practice of projecting sensation into images is embedded in the way in which viewers learned the art of imagining and painters the art of representing. This necessarily conditioned their reception of Classical forms. By the sixteenth century this tendency of imagining was so common that, as we shall now see, the emerging allegorical tradition of the five senses associated specific subjects to specific sensory ranges.

## 5 Allegories



No evidence survives that the five senses were represented as an independent subject before the Middle Ages. The remains of Classical art display a small range of sensations, from the *Spinario* (a boy removing a thorn from his foot) to the *Laocoön*; sarcophagi frequently show figures engaging in various tactile interactions, but the Ancients never seem to have taken up the five senses as an independent subject. The earliest known representation of the five senses is the *Fuller Brooch*, an Anglo-Saxon jewel of the late ninth century now in the British Museum. The five figures decorating its concave surface each experience one sensation and have been interpreted as the five senses on the grounds of much later visual examples.<sup>1</sup> By the thirteenth century, however, the five senses feature as figures, experiencing sensation in the illuminated capital letters of Aristotelian work, principally the *De anima* and the *Parva naturalia*, and as labelled organs in anatomical representations of the head with its three ventricles (see illus. 2).<sup>2</sup>

Carl Nordenfalk has identified three early modern ways of representing the senses: by means of animals reputed for the acuity of a specific sense; by means of figures experiencing sensation and by means of sensory organs. By the fifteenth century the senses made their first noted appearance as female allegories in the tapestry of the *Lady with the Unicorn*.<sup>3</sup> By the sixteenth century they have indeed become an iconographic type broadcast across Europe through engraving. These are usually series of five plates, such as those of Georg Pencz (1540) or Cornelis Cort (1561),

featuring female personifications experiencing the sensation they represent and accompanied by related animals.

Scholars have frequently invoked these aspects to identify isolated figures experiencing sensation as allegories of the sense they experience. A young woman with a flower would be the sense of smell; one tuning a lute or singing would incarnate hearing. Painted eaters are sometimes taken for allegories of taste and women with mirrors are not infrequently interpreted as sight.<sup>4</sup> Such an approach assumes that sensation in representation can only signify itself, a view plainly contradicted by five cycles of the Five Senses printed between 1570 and 1603 after drawings by the prolific Antwerp artist Marten de Vos (1532–1603). These suggest that sensation meant a little more than itself (illus. 49–53).

These prints, alternatively engraved by Wierix, Saedler and Collaert, follow the same compositional pattern: on the foreground, one personification surrounded by animals and objects; on the background, one or two biblical stories related to the



49 'Sight' from *The Five Senses*, engraving of c. 1580 after a drawing by Marten de Vos.



50 'Hearing' from *The Five Senses*, engraving of c. 1580 after a drawing by Marten de Vos.

sense described. Each figure experiences the sensation it symbolizes: Sight looks at herself, Hearing plucks a lute, Smell smells a flower, Taste is about to bite an apple, Touch feels a spider's web and experiences the bite of a bird clawing her hands. The animals located at the foot of each personification are proverbial, each for the acuity of a single sense: eagle for sight, dog for smell, tortoise, lizard and scorpion for touch and monkey for taste. Natural and artificial objects associated with one or several senses also serve as attributes: flowers for Smell, mirror for Sight, musical instruments for Hearing, accumulation of food for Taste. The main innovation of Marteen de Vos's series is the addition of the following biblical stories in the background:

SMELL: Adam animated by the breath of God – Mary Magdalene anointing the feet of Christ  
 SIGHT: God showing Eden to Adam and Eve – Christ healing the blind man





51 'Smell' from *The Five Senses*, engraving of c. 1580 after a drawing by Marten de Vos.



52 'Touch' from *The Five Senses*, engraving of c. 1580 after a drawing by Marten de Vos.

TASTE: Adam and Eve eating the apple – Christ multiplying the loaves and fish

HEARING: God calling Adam and Eve – John the Baptist preaching

TOUCH: Adam and Eve expelled from Eden – Christ rescuing Peter from drowning.<sup>5</sup>

Such an arrangement occurs frequently in other prints designed by de Vos, notably the series of the Winds, the Planets, the Continents and the Seasons.<sup>6</sup> He merely uses a familiar compositional formula harking back to medieval painting where accessories and attributes occupy the foreground and serve as hints to identify the scene featured in the middle ground. Among the most common are lilies and roses for the Virgin and instruments of the Passion for scenes of the Deposition. In the present case, however, the image directs the viewer to imagine the background scenes within a specific range of sensations.



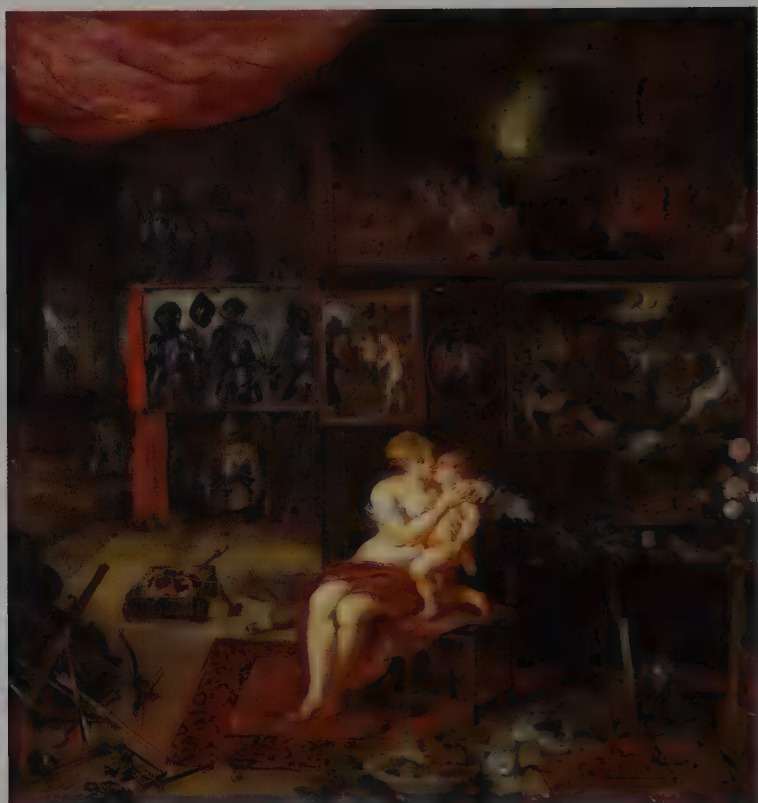
53 'Taste' from *The Five Senses*, engraving of c. 1580 after a drawing by Marten de Vos.



Furthermore, four of these five allegorical figures have roots in Christian art. The ancestors of Hearing tuning or plucking a stringed instrument are the angels and musicians of medieval psalters and Renaissance altarpieces.<sup>7</sup> Those of Smell are Madonnas smelling the flowers presented to them by saints. The hand of Touch seized by the claws of a bird has a precedent in the iconography of the bird pecking the fingers of the Christ child.<sup>8</sup> Taste about to taste an apple is surely evocative of the Fall. Sight looking in a mirror is the only sense allegory with no Christian source – but a secular equivalent, the allegory of Prudence, is generally shown holding a mirror.<sup>9</sup>

By the early years of the seventeenth century a team of artists including Rubens, Jan Brueghel, Gerard Seghers and Frans Francken further developed the idea of attaching narrative subjects to representations of the five senses (illus. 54).<sup>10</sup> The basic composition is similar to de Vos's cycle but in the foreground Venus and Cupid experiencing each of the senses, and surrounded by various accessories, have replaced allegorical figures. The background is no longer a landscape with biblical stories, but a collection of religious and secular paintings related to each sense. The gallery of Sight includes an entire collection of paintings, sculptures and engravings, some with optical themes such as the Healing of the Blind Man and the Judgement of Paris; the gallery of Touch includes Hell, the Circumcision, the Flagellation and a battle scene (the destruction of Sennacherib and his army).<sup>11</sup> The gallery of Hearing displays images with sonic themes such as the competition between Apollo and Marsyas, Fame with its trumpet, Christ preaching, the nine Muses, the Annunciation and Orpheus charming the animals.<sup>12</sup> The gallery of Taste features scenes of Biblical and secular banquets. Of the two versions of Smell the earliest does not have a gallery but shows Venus and Cupid surrounded by flowers and vapours. A later version of the allegory of Smell, by the same artists, features the Magdalene anointing the feet of Christ and the Goddess Flora (illus. 55).<sup>13</sup>

The *Five Senses* series by Marten de Vos and those of his colleagues and contemporaries, Rubens, Brueghel and Francken, enriched the iconography of sensation with narrative subjects



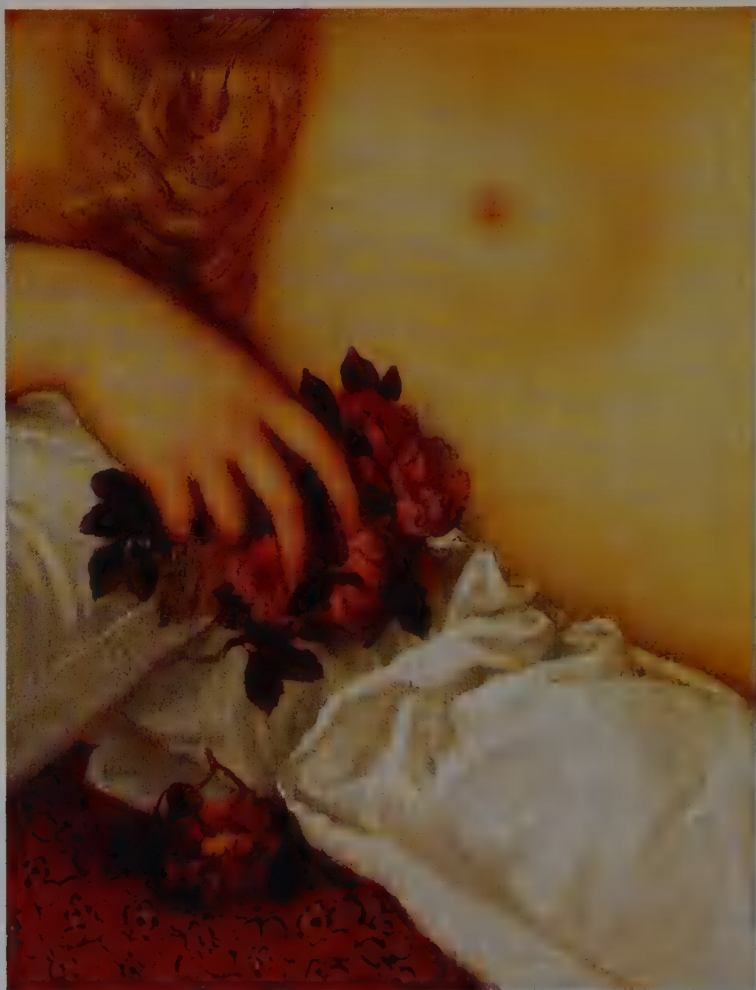
54 Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Breughel 1, detail from 'Touch' (from a series of *The Five Senses*), c. 1617, oil on panel.

associated with each sense. For this purpose these reputed and well-travelled Northern artists picked themes from the broad European repertoire where they recognized meaningful ranges of sensations suitable for accompanying allegorical figures. In fact the series in which Rubens participated have been studied in the context of the history of art collecting. They provide a synthesis and a celebration of several centuries of sensationalization of images as well as a point of access to the representation and codification of sensation in mainstream European art.



55 Jan Breughel, Gerard Seghers and Frans Francken, *Sight and Smell*, 1636, oil on canvas.

Following these leads the second part of this book will now examine samples of religious and profane subjects related to the specific character, spatial and semantic range of each of the senses.



56 Detail from Titian, *Venus of Urbino* (illus. 74).

PART TWO



# Sensation in Representation



57 'The Hierarchy of the Five Senses', from Achille Bocchi, *Symbolicarum quaestionum, de universo genere, quas serio ludebat* (Bologna, 1574).



## 6 Sight



For the Renaissance, as well as for most people today, sight was the most important sense. The Renaissance celebrated sight and placed it at the apex of the hierarchy of the senses. A detail of Achille Bocchius' *Symbolicarum quaestionum, de universo genere, quas serio ludebat* provides a plain illustration: each of the steps supporting an obelisk displays images of a sense organ (illus. 57). From top to bottom we have eyes, ears, noses, mouths and hands.

Aristotelian philosophy provided the organic foundation of fifteenth-century Neo-Platonic elaborations. These are particularly important since they brought about a distinct moralization of sight that spread from Latin philosophical texts to mainstream vernacular literature and radiated from Italy to the rest of Europe. Thus this chapter focuses on the Renaissance reception of Sight as a mediator between the sensory configuration of the outside world and the mind. The first section examines how sight was approached and moralized. The second section focuses on perspective and introduces one of the main themes of this second part: the evocation of space by means of allusion to non-visual sensations.

### Neo-Platonic eyes

For Aristotle the eye perceives only colour, while the common sense turns colours into a moving world of space, possible textures, smells and likely sounds.<sup>1</sup> Thus sight encompasses the processing of chromatic impressions into images suitable for sensory anticipation of the world. Of all the senses it provides the most

information about the outside world.<sup>2</sup> Hearing comes second. Smell, taste and touch on the contrary can only account for what comes into direct contact with them. The Neo-Platonic philosopher Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) further elaborated on these views in his *De Amore* (1474), a commentary on Plato's *Symposium*. He declared sight and hearing superior not only for the reasons already invoked by Aristotle but also on the ground that they perceive grace and harmony, immaterial entities inaccessible to other sensory channels. Thus, in Ficino's universe, visible beauty is a reflection of the divine shining through the human body and the first step on the Platonic ladder of love leading to the contemplation of the divine.<sup>3</sup>

Neo-Platonism is a marginal rather than mainstream Renaissance philosophical current but Ficino's *De Amore*, thanks to its vernacular version, exercised much influence on sixteenth-century Italian literature. The belief that the sight of beauty, usually feminine beauty, can trigger the ascension of the soul features in classics such as Pietro Bembo's *Asolani* (1505) and Baldassare Castiglione's *Cortigiano* (1528). From there it spread to Renaissance love literature. Platonic notions of love and sight also circulated in the innumerable commentaries on, and commented editions of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* which by the early sixteenth century had become the standard model of Italian vernacular poetry.<sup>4</sup>

Such literature is more mundane than philosophical. This impression is best sampled by a lost discourse of the Venetian *letterato*, Antonio Brocardo (c. 1500–1531), alleging that high-class sex workers are a ladder to the contemplation of God, or by a long-winded lecture of Girolamo Ruscelli on Platonic love themes concluded by a list of the most beautiful living women of the Italic peninsula thanks to whom, we are assured, their Platonic contemplators may reach the ladder leading to the Neo-Platonic One.<sup>5</sup>

Could painting produce similar effects by means of its visibility? The application of Neo-Platonism to the visual arts is the subject of a lecture of 1549 by the Florentine writer and scholar Giambattista Gelli (1498–1563) delivered at the Accademia Fiorentina, the official Florentine literary forum of the time. There Gelli analyses the two sonnets Petrarch wrote on the portrait of his

mistress Laura by the Sienese painter Simone Martini. The first sonnet praises the portrait following the doctrines of Plato, the second those of Aristotle. The 'Aristotelian' sonnet applies to artistic creation familiar principles laid out in the *Physics*. Gelli explains that the artist merely introduced form into matter through four different causes. In the 'Platonic' sonnet we learn that the painter contemplated the idea of Laura and reproduced it.<sup>6</sup> Gelli nevertheless observes the impossibility of such a feat since Platonic ideas are absolutes and cannot, therefore, apply to individuals. He concludes that the sonnet is only a courtesy to the painter. In these same years another Florentine writer, Benedetto Varchi (1503–1565), published two lectures on a sonnet by Michelangelo, in praise of his art and of his behaviour as a Platonic lover. Nevertheless, in spite of the availability of Neo-Platonic ideas on love and beauty, and the image of Michelangelo as a Platonic lover of beauty, neither Varchi nor any of his contemporaries ever suggested that the contemplation of his work might lead to the divine.<sup>7</sup>

The only discernible impact of Neo-Platonic sight on the visual arts relates to the emergence of a vocabulary descriptive of incorporeal essences perceptible by sight alone and initially devised for the appreciation of humans – mostly women by men. We find them at work in texts dealing with feminine beauty, such as Agnolo Firenzuola's *Dialogo delle Bellezze delle Donne* (Florence, 1548), soaked in amorous Platonism. For Firenzuola, essences such as *leggiadria*, *venustà*, *gratia*, *vaghezza*, *aria* and *maestà* are the most important divine emanations shining through the body of beautiful women.<sup>8</sup> Unsurprisingly similar ideals feature in the *Ragionamenti* (1534) of Pietro Aretino, where an ageing and prosperous prostitute teaches her daughter the art of seducing men.<sup>9</sup>

It is no surprise, then, that a vocabulary developed to describe, appreciate and desire humans did transfer to the appreciation and criticism of artistic representations of the human figure. By the 1550s this vocabulary has become part of art criticism. In a database of Renaissance artistic literature the word *grazia* appears 4,311 times, while *aria* and *bellezza* feature respectively 2,283 and 1,994 times.<sup>10</sup>

Thus part of the vocabulary of Renaissance art theory and criticism has roots in the Neo-Platonic valuation of sight as a sense perceptive of incorporeal qualities carried by humans. This is not to say that Renaissance art became increasingly 'visual' and detached from the other senses. Neo-Platonic aesthetics provided only one layer of the appreciation and moralization of the representation of the human figure in Renaissance artistic culture of which we have examined the tactile aspects in the previous chapters.

### Sensation and space

The characterization of the Renaissance as the age of sight is also based on the discovery of perspective, a method of representing space following medieval ideas on visual perception.<sup>11</sup> Broadly speaking there are two types of perspective: atmospheric and linear. Atmospheric perspective, famously elaborated by Leonardo among others, expands into art the Aristotelian assertion that the eye perceives colour. It represents closeness and distance by means of a gradual transition from warm to bluish hues and from sharpness to blurriness. By 1500 it had become more or less conventional to represent distant background with bluish tones. Linear perspective serves to depict urban and architectural spaces. The earliest art theoretical text to mention it is Alberti's *Della Pittura* (1436). Alberti follows medieval optics according to which the eye emits rays. These receive the colours of the things they reach and transmit it back to the eye. Painting is, according to Alberti, nothing but a cross section of this visual pyramid of which the apex is in the eye and the basis in the world.<sup>12</sup>

Several fifteenth-century painters explored and exploited the possibilities of linear perspective, but their sixteenth-century successors used it very sparingly. El Greco and Caravaggio have even been suspected of not knowing the basic rules of perspective. Be that as it may, the emphasis on the human figure characteristic of sixteenth-century art means that the use of perspective was often unnecessary.

On the Sistine Chapel ceiling Michelangelo created an imaginary architectural frame with multiple vanishing points but none

of the stories inserted into this grid resort to linear or atmospheric perspective. There is no perspective in his controversial *Last Judgment* (1534–41) acclaimed in its day as a work revealing all that nature can do with the human body.<sup>13</sup> Human figures using all their senses are the only hints provided to the viewer's brain to imagine space. Some produce loud sounds, others display multiple tactile sensations related to bodily weight and to stretching (illus. 58). In the upper right-hand side they embrace and kiss, while on the top athletic angels pivot around the weight of the gigantic column of the Flagellation. Further down on the right, one figure even bites its thumb while a demon seems to pull its testicles (illus. 59).<sup>14</sup>

Thus in the *Last Judgment*, as in so many Renaissance art works, it is the human figure experiencing sensation that produces an impression of space, rather than linear or atmospheric perspective. Different senses produce different perceptions of space. Rooted in internal self-awareness, touch and taste extend their spatial impressions to bodily presence, relief and ambient temperature. Hearing, sight and smell have one element in common:



58 Michelangelo, detail from the *Last Judgment*, 1534–41, fresco.



59 Michelangelo, detail from the *Last Judgment*, 1534–41, fresco.

air. Representations of sounds, gazes and fumes can express aerial space without any recourse to perspective.

In conclusion the superior status of sight rests on two distinct appraisals: the Neo-Platonic assumption that sight is capable of spiritual perceptions and the Aristotelian approach according to which sight provides by far the most information about the sensory configuration of the outside world. Assessing the impact of the Platonic approach on the visual arts brings us towards a rhetoric detached from the body but associated with the conventions of love literature – and surely masking sensuous desires. The Aristotelian approach, however, implies the existence of a visual semantic of the sensory world, which changed over the centuries but has been preserved in images. Following this second aspect we will now examine samples of some of the most basic sensory signs by which artists prompted their viewer to see space and sense on flat images.



## 7 Touch



Touch is the most complex of the senses. Sight perceives colour, hearing sound, smell odours, taste flavour, but touch has many objects encompassing internal and external bodily sensations.<sup>1</sup> Representation of tactile perception thus comes in several categories including expressions of internal bodily awareness, skin contact and perception of ambient temperature.

Cultural historians have begun to gauge the importance of this sense about which scientific discourse has considerably changed since early modern times.<sup>2</sup> The modern sense of touch encompasses a variety of perceptions, now classified as general somatic sensations, that is, sensations pertaining to the body. To quote from a late twentieth-century medical textbook, the somatosensory system encompasses 'all the receptors in the skin, the joints and the skeletal muscles with their tendons . . . superficial sensibility is mediated by receptors located in the skin, and deep sensibility by those in the underlying muscles, tendons and joints'.<sup>3</sup> Somatic sensations fall into four categories: proprioception, or the inner image of one's own body and the positions of one's limbs (muscle control and movement depend on this sense); mechanoreception, or skin surface sensation; nociception, or perception of pain, and thermoreception, the perception of temperature. The following pages will examine the most basic representations of these sensations in Renaissance art.

## Interior touch

The proprioceptive system was surely as active in the Renaissance as it is today, for no coordinated movement is possible without it. Even if Renaissance artists and their audience did not have such categories at hand their own scientific definition implied that touch produced some kind of interior body-image. Following Aristotle's treatise *On the Soul*, touch stood under the skin and tactile sensations were compared to the perception of blows through a shield. The organ of touch is a nerve that takes root in the brain, passing through the marrow of the spinal cord from where it spreads its net to all parts of the body.<sup>4</sup> Awareness of its existence amounts to perceiving a tactile body image. Thus, as a first layer of tactility in art, we could approach sixteenth-century art and its emphasis on the anatomical construction of the human figure in terms of the plasticity of this inner tactile figure.

Late twentieth-century science accounts for this inner awareness through the complex of perceptions and neuronal activities that form the body image. Proprioception is particularly significant in this context as it yields a constant flow of information about the position of the body's parts at every waking moment. Proprioceptors, which are found in muscles and around joints, provide the nervous system with an inner image of the human figure by means of which it anticipates and coordinates movement. Upon this figure, which originates from the muscle tissue itself, the brain generates an inner body-image. This inner image can give rise to the phenomenon of the phantom limb: the feeling that amputated arms or legs are still present, causing at times sensations of pleasure or pain. Recent experiments have shown that it is possible to articulate and move phantom limbs and even to amputate them.<sup>5</sup> This phenomenon suggests that the brain produces a sensitive inner image of the body, one that is eventually independent from its material foundation and sufficiently autonomous to continue existing after the amputation of the limbs from which it originates.

Postural awareness features most visibly in dance treatises, and more broadly in texts on good manners, which assign great

importance to the impression projected by deportment.<sup>6</sup> Long before the nineteenth-century German theoreticians of empathy late medieval religious art and education had taught audiences to empathize with images in a postural way.

The founder of the Dominican order, for instance, composed a treatise in which he matched seven types of prayer with seven different positions.<sup>7</sup> As for the Franciscans, whose influence spread throughout Europe from the thirteenth century onwards, they prescribed an empathic piety that culminated in the stigmatization of their founder. This episode in the life of Francis of Assisi served as an iconographic type and inspired further stigmatizations.<sup>8</sup> It contributed to the diffusion of a model of prayer based on postural imitation, at least in monastic piety. This use of posture as expressive empathy occurs in Italian mystical texts of the Middle Ages and Renaissance: Vanna da Orvieto (1264–1306), for example, would meditate upon the Passion of the apostles Peter and Paul, while assuming their positions at the moment of martyrdom. She adopted the same postural empathy when meditating the Passion of Christ.<sup>9</sup> So did Angela da Foligno (1248–1309), Stefana Quinzani (1457–1530) and many other mystics whose greatest hope was to be privileged enough to experience all the sufferings of Christ.<sup>10</sup>

The standard position of prayer in images of donors remains that of genuflexion and joined hands. But, as we have seen, accounts of the Crucifixion – surely the most common image of Christianity – emphasized the violent cruciform postural stretching of Christ's body.<sup>11</sup> To be understood such an image of proprioceptive torture required from the audience some postural experience and imagination as much as the ability of the brain to conceptualize postures as geometrical figures.

Other cultures have developed this potential in different and unrelated directions. One distinct feature of yoga, for instance, exploits this same ability by setting the body into positions conceptualized as shapes or figures such as fish, lotus, mountain or arrow. The use of posture in these meditative practices highlights organic similarities and cultural differences between European and Oriental approaches to the body and its postural imagery.

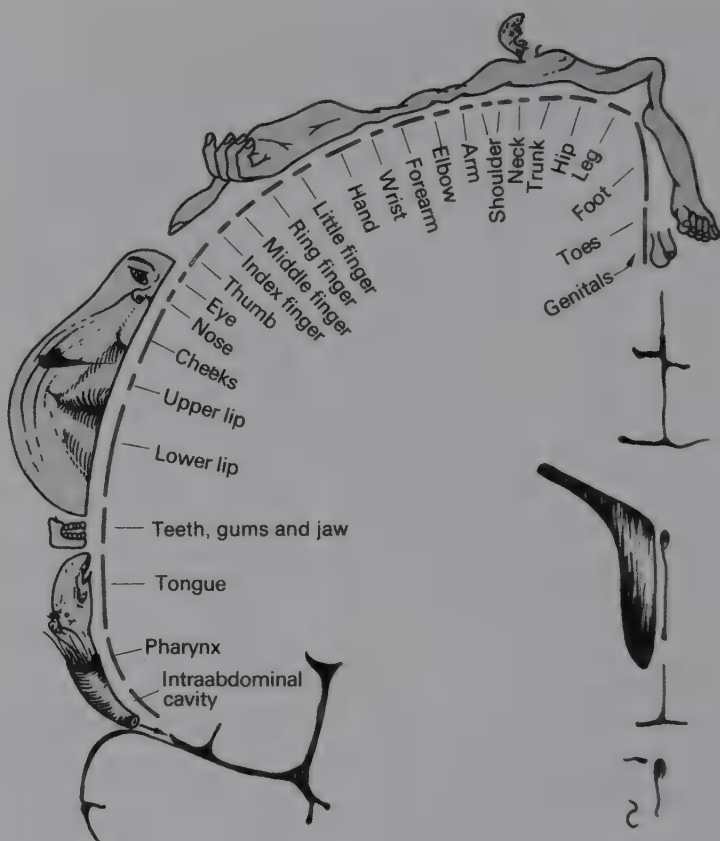
It may well be that the historical encounter between an Antique method of executing fugitive slaves and criminals and the emphasis on the sufferings of Christ brought about by late medieval religion led Renaissance artists to shift this imagery of postural brutality from representations of violence to expressions of grace. They invented new positions inspired by Classical art, making impossible postures plausible to the brain and graceful to the eye – impossible positions, as Gombrich once observed, with the nose and the toes pointing in opposite directions.<sup>12</sup> In fact the complex pleasure of projecting oneself into elongated limbs and postures never seen before seems to have been one of the delights that many Renaissance artists conveyed to their audiences. In this context the elongations and torsions of the human figure characteristic of Mannerist artists such as Parmigianino, Pontormo and Bronzino may well be understood as continuous explorations of the plasticity of the inner body image (illus. 60).

The practice of *disegno* also promoted postural awareness, on the simple ground that the artist *is* anatomy, bone, muscle and flesh. We have seen how this approach converges with Bronzino's postural fantasies in which the brush/penis is intermediary between the body of the artist and that of the figures.<sup>13</sup> Leonardo provides another fine example of this artistic bodily awareness. His unfavourable interpretation of the proverb *ogni pittore dipinge se stesso* (every painter depicts himself) refers to involuntary self-representation. The words he uses, *aria, figura, acti, modi*, designate the entire figure in movement and the very personal ways in which such movements are indicative.<sup>14</sup> Following a similar approach the Venetian painter Paolo Pino in his *Dialogo di Pittura* (1548) associates body perception and projection and observes that to paint beautiful and graceful figures the painter himself should be of elegant proportions.<sup>15</sup>

The inner image of the body is also the bearer of zones of particular sensitivities. Tactile receptors are principally concentrated on the hands, feet and mouth areas, followed by nipples, genitalia and feet (illus. 61). This disjunction between appearance and tactile self-perception should prompt us to focus on the ways in



60 Jacopo Pontormo, *Study of Figures*, c. 1517, red chalk.



61 Sensory homunculus, after W. Penfield and T. Rasmussen, *The Cerebral Cortex of Man* (1950).

which artists have depicted these sensitive zones as generative of interactivity and meaning.

## Seeing volume

We have seen in chapter Two how religious practices promoted tactile imagining.<sup>16</sup> Their poles are the extreme violence of the Passion, rarely followed by Italian art, and the gentle universe of scenes of the Infancy of Christ, which on the contrary inspired iconographic types and variations spanning the whole of Christian



art. The fourteenth-century vernacular compilation of Franciscan legends known as the *Fioretti* or *Little Flowers of Saint Francis* applies the advice of meditation handbooks to describing a vision in which the Franciscan Conrad of Offida holds the Christ Child in his lap: '[Brother Conrad] taking Him [the Christ Child] most devoutly, embracing and kissing Him and clasping Him to his chest, was wholly melted and dissolved in divine and indescribable love.'<sup>17</sup>

As Christiane Klapisch-Zuber's study of Christ Child dolls in Renaissance Florence has demonstrated, these intimate, imaginative interactions were also practised in the domestic sphere.<sup>18</sup> The iconography of the Madonna and Child echoed and sustained these practices in so far as it generated an imagery of tactile signs: images that are not necessarily tri-dimensional, but that nevertheless prompt the mental reconstruction of volume. Their origins are to be found in the Byzantine type of the Tender Mother (*Glykophilousa*), which developed in the centuries following the Byzantine iconoclastic controversies (726–843).<sup>19</sup> The shifts in art and theology prompted by the victory of the iconophiles led to a humanization of Christian sacred figures and eventually inspired Italian artists of the late Middle Ages to elaborate and depict numerous and varied modes of interaction between the Virgin and Child – a tendency particularly evident in the work of Sienese painters of the fourteenth century.<sup>20</sup>

The rise of the concept of relief (*rilievo*) as an essential part of painting follows this broad trend. We find it in Cennino Cennini's late fourteenth-century *Libro dell'Arte* and it was later developed by Leonardo and his followers through the pictorial treatment of colour, light and shadow.<sup>21</sup> Thus methods and means of representation underwent dramatic changes over the course of the fifteenth century; while the same tactile iconographic themes remained, their treatment became increasingly sophisticated.

The Madonna touching, holding, and sometimes pressing the foot of the Christ Child is perhaps the most common representation of the tactile experience of volume.<sup>22</sup> The motif is used consistently as a pictorial sign throughout five hundred years of Christian iconography, from the Middle Ages through

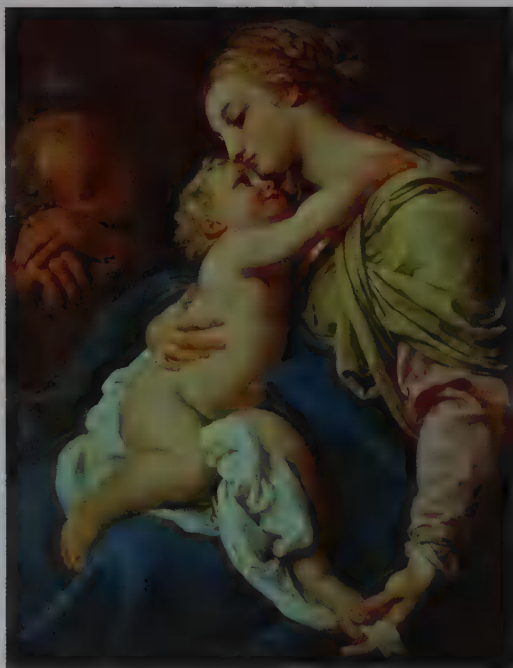
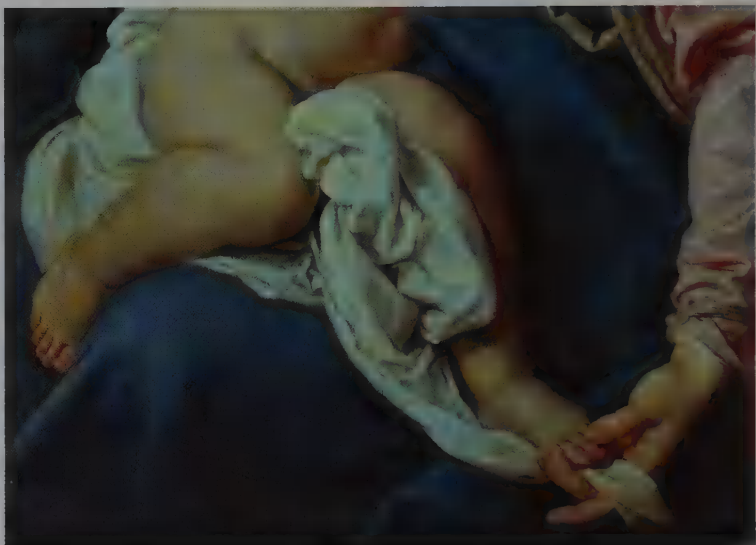


62 Magdalene Master, *Virgin and Child*, c. 1260–70, tempera and gilding on panel.

the Renaissance into the Baroque. Three chronologically disparate examples, by the anonymous Magdalene Master (c. 1260–70), Raphael (c. 1502), both Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, and Pompeo Batoni (c. 1774), Rome, Museo Capitolino, illustrate this continuity. The right hand of the Magdalene Master's Madonna touches the Child's foot in three places: the tip of the toe, the heel, and the base of the ankle; her left hand, touched by the Child's fist, adopts a curved shape that suggests the volume of the Child's leg (illus. 62). Raphael's Perugino-esque Madonna touches the inside of the Christ Child's foot with her left hand while contemplating a prayer book (illus. 58). Her mind is absorbed both by this devotional exercise of reading and by the continuous sensation of holding the Child's foot. Pompeo Batoni's *Holy Family* (illus. 64) shows multiple tactile sensations: the Child's foot rests partly on the



63 Raphael,  
*Madonna and  
Child*, c. 1502,  
oil on panel.



64 Pompeo Batoni,  
*Holy Family*, 1774,  
oil on canvas, with  
detail above.

silky shroud, and partly on the Virgin's palm, her middle and ring finger touching the side of his big toe and her thumb caressing the tip of his other toes. These iconographic variations are conspicuous in Tuscan paintings and sculptures executed during the decades surrounding the rebirth of low relief sculpture.<sup>23</sup> One thinks of Masolino's *Carneseccchi Madonna* (1423, Bremen, Kunsthalle), Fra Angelico's *Madonna dell'Umiltà* of c. 1420 (Pisa, Museo Nazionale di San Matteo) or Martino di Bartolommeo and Giovanni da Napoli's *Madonna and Child* of 1403 (also in Pisa), where (as in Marteen de Vos's *Allegory of Touch*) a goldfinch presses its claw on the hand of the smiling Child.<sup>24</sup>

After the Christ Child the second most touched figure of Christian art is the dead Christ and iconographic variations ranging from the Descent from the Cross to the Pietà and the Entombment, all subjects requiring the expression of bodily weight and the representation of one figure touched by many hands. The *Dead Christ Tended by Angels* in the Victoria and Albert Museum, attributed to Donatello and his workshop, provides a



65 Donatello (attrib.), *Dead Christ Tended by Angels*, c. 1436–40, marble relief.



fine example (illus. 65).<sup>25</sup> The contrast between the diminutive hands of the putti and the adult body of Christ serves to stress the latter's volume and weight. The head of Christ, realized in higher relief, is supported by the tiny hand of the putto to the left. The putto on the right, with one hand on Christ's torso and the other on his shoulder, experiences, expresses and enhances the massive volume of Christ's lifeless body. The feathers of his wings caressing the left hand of Christ are an additional tactile prompt comparable to personifications of touch feeling a spider's web.<sup>26</sup>

The Virgin of the Lamentation, collapsing or unconscious at the foot of the Cross, also receives the attention of many hands. In the preceding chapter we saw how Raphael prepared such a figure, touched by six hands, or thirty fingers, imagining it anatomically as skeleton and muscles (see illus. 30). One figure holds her body, another checks her pulse and a third one holds her head. These various signs convey to the mind of the viewer information about body temperature, pulse, texture, volume and weight which encourage multi-sensory imagining and enhance the impression of lifelikeness.

### Hiding pain

While Italian Renaissance painters developed increasingly sophisticated methods of depicting tactile contact by means of volume, relief and texture, they remained reticent in depicting pain and wounds. Artists and their audience certainly enjoyed the expression of pain, witness the impact of the *Laocoön*,<sup>27</sup> but disliked the representation of wounds. We have seen one example of this reluctance in a previous chapter on the iconography of the Passion. Even if the staging of public whipping and capital execution was common throughout urban Europe, very little of this spectacle has been recorded or used in Italian representation of the Christ of the Passion.<sup>28</sup> Northern images of the Christ of the Flagellation show his body covered with blood and wounds, but such imagery disappeared in the north with the Reformation and in the Italic peninsula with the Renaissance.

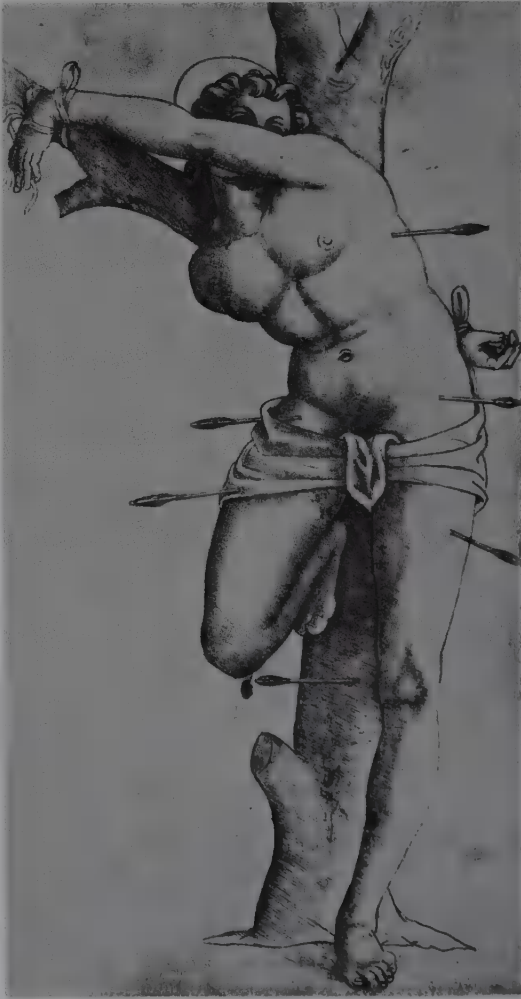


The iconography of plague offers a secular parallel to this reluctance of the visual arts to depict the wounded body. During the period that also witnessed an unprecedented rise of naturalism in art, the visual arts provide hardly any evidence matching literary and medical descriptions, in spite of the large and multifaceted production of images prompted by the Black Death, which has in turn generated many studies and several exhibition catalogues. Scenes of plague occasionally include piles of corpses in greyish tones and frequently at least one figure pinching its nose. They appear at the bottom of images of the two main saints invoked in times of pestilence: St Roch and St Sebastian.

St Roch is customarily represented with a golf-ball sized bubo on his thigh (illus. 66). Written sources tell us, however, that buboes



66 Cherubino  
Alberti, *St Roch*,  
c. 1600, engraving.



67 Attrib. Giovanni Antonio da Brescia, St Sebastian, c. 1500, engraving.

took root near the lymphatic glands, in the armpits and the groin – a far less decorous place which would have forced artists to represent the saint's genitalia.<sup>29</sup> Thus images of St Roch do not correspond to the much uglier reality of the Black Death. The other main saint invoked against the Plague, St Sebastian, was first martyred with multiple arrows, survived, and was later clubbed to death (illus. 67). From the sixth century onwards the arrows



68 Giorgio Vasari, *God Sends the Plague upon the People of Israel*, predella from the *St Roch* altarpiece, 1537, oil on panel.

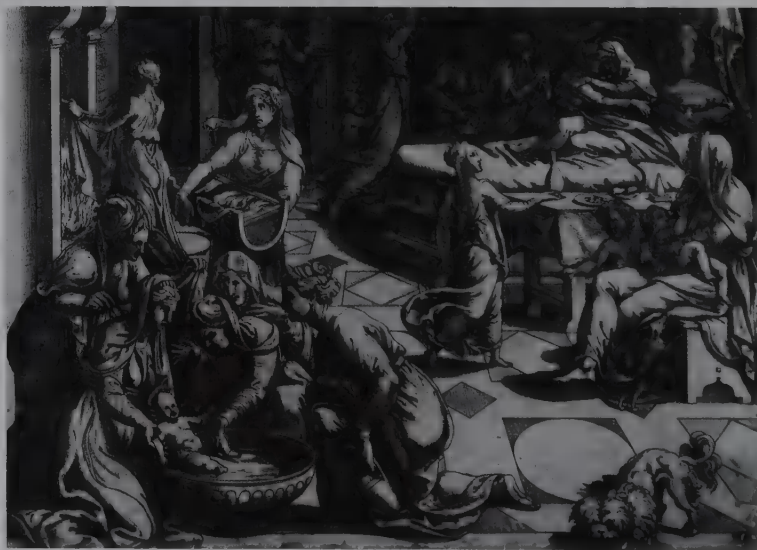
were understood as indicative of the pain inflicted by plague buboes.<sup>30</sup> Arrows also appear outside the imagery of St Sebastian in personifications of the plague, as for instance in Vasari's *St Roch* altarpiece (illus. 68).<sup>31</sup> In pre-Christian times, when Apollo was invoked against the plague, his arrows were occasionally interpreted as metaphors for the disease.<sup>32</sup>

Thus although Renaissance and Baroque Italian plague iconography expresses the anxiety of its age, it does not provide accurate representations of the ravages of the Black Death on the human body.<sup>33</sup> To depict the skin of plague-stricken bodies painters used the same palette that they selected to indicate dead figures such as the Christ of the *Entombment*. There seems to be a general reluctance to represent the ravages of the plague on human skin, including rashes and boils, as if these had reached a threshold only trespassed by medical illustrations. Thus the visible aspects of the disease are concealed to the eye and only mediated by indirect signs of its familiar and violent sensory impact, either through one metonymic bubo or many arrows. Unlike the arrows of Cupid, the wounds of which represent the pain of love, or the seven daggers planted in the heart of the Virgin of the Seven Sorrows, the arrows of the plague are signs of physical rather than psychological torment.

## Feeling the heat

While Italian Renaissance art avoided representing the decaying broken body it continued developing gentler tactile themes inherited from the Byzantine tradition through medieval art. Scenes of the Nativity of the Virgin and of John the Baptist, and sometimes of Christ, offer another example of the depiction of basic sensation by which the viewer can anticipate and project space. Most examples, from early Christian to early modern times, include one figure, usually located on the border of the image, plunging her hand in the water of a bath in which the newborn child is about to be washed. Sometimes another figure dries and warms some clothes against a chimney fire (illus. 69).

This imagery echoes the domestic customs – and indeed necessity – of bathing newborn babies and wrapping them in warm cloth.<sup>34</sup> It has classical antecedents in scenes of the birth of imperial children as well as heroes and semi-gods like Bacchus, Hercules and Alexander, which also include a servant about to



69 Diana Scultori, *The Nativity of the Baptist*, c. 1540, engraving, after a lost drawing by Giulio Romano.

bath the newborn child.<sup>35</sup> The motif passes to Christian art where it establishes itself as a stable element of the Byzantine iconography of the Nativity of the Virgin.<sup>36</sup> Textual sources played no part in its diffusion – only two Armenian texts unknown to the West allude to a bath in their account of the birth of the Virgin.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless baby baths feature on the edge of Nativities of the Virgin, the Baptist and sometimes of Christ, from East and West. A splendid example is a twelfth-century mosaic of Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio in Palermo (illus. 70).<sup>38</sup> The newborn child sits on the knee of a midwife who is plunging her hand in the bath while another adds some water.

The theme circulates throughout the Middle Ages. We encounter it again, always near the border of the image, in sixteenth-century interpretations such as those of Sebastiano del Piombo or Francesco Salviati (illus. 71). Francesco Salviati's version, in the Oratory of San Giovanni Decollato in Rome, emphasizes the sonic dimension by showing the pitcher of water held high over the bath so that the water appears gurgling and rippling. The maid touching the water with the tips of her fingers touches the baby with her other hand, providing a further indication of her attention to temperature. Furthermore the flow of water placed between the two maids assists the brain to imagine space by assessing the distances separating the two figures in relation to the central axis of the water flow. Thus, again, space is defined in terms of the relationship of figures and things.

Newborn babies come with placenta and blood and it is indeed difficult to conceive of a culture that does not wash its newborn members. In the West, Galen advises frequently bathing newborn children to reproduce the conditions of the womb. Thus the bathtub stands as a transposition of a domestic custom into the universe of the Evangelical narrative.<sup>39</sup> From there the bathing of newborn children, be it the Virgin, the Baptist or Christ, has been interpreted as an anticipation of the purifying baptismal rite of immersion and it has even been suggested that the bathtub could signify the womb of the church.<sup>40</sup>

The bathtub sub-theme shares a structural similarity with the allegories of the senses where the accessories placed at the border





70 *The Nativity*, a 12th-century mosaic in S. Maria dell'Ammiraglio, Palermo.





71 Francesco Salviati, detail from the *Nativity of the Baptist*, 1550, fresco.

of the image serve as hints for apprehending the main scene in specific sensory terms (see illus. 49–53). Here the viewer entering the image is greeted by a figure depicted in a state of attentiveness to water temperature. This may well be a prompt to imagining the ambient air of the room in terms of hot and cold, moist and dry. In other words, the image of the bath provides some hints for imagining what we might call a *thermoceptive* atmospheric perspective.

Many examples of these Nativities are frescoes; the thermic imagination they require is made particularly vivid in the winter months when the interior of churches is intensely cold and damp and makes one feel inhabited by a cold, wet and shivering skeleton. Regardless of the season this invitation to imagine the warm and damp interior of a birth scene sets up in the imagination a first sensory layer, made up of atmospheric conditions evocative of those of the womb, birth and first bath. We are simply gliding from a literal level of meaning built on familiar sensory evocations to one of symbolic elaboration.

In this chapter we have moved from interior space to ambient space where perfumes and scents accompany the perceptions of hot and cold, wet and dry. This is where the iconography of the senses crosses the iconography of the element of air which carries not only heat but also odour and sound, the subjects of the next two chapters.

## 8

# Smell



Perceiver of airborne and vaporous substances, smell was considered an intermediary sense between the corporeal world of taste and touch and the spatial universe of sight and hearing. Its scientific definition has changed since the Renaissance to the extent that its organ has been relocated. For modern sensory physiology the receptors of smell are nerves located in the nose. For ancient and early modern science the organ of smell is a gland protected by the nose and located at the base of the brain, more or less where Hinduism has located a third eye. Present day science has now mapped the olfactory bulb and olfactory cortex in the same area of the brain.<sup>1</sup> Gregor Reisch's *Margarita philosophica*, a popular encyclopaedia first printed in late fifteenth-century Germany and frequently republished and translated, provides a straightforward description of the early modern olfactory organ:

The organ of smell is located inside the brain, above the nose so that it is not easily disturbed by contraries. This organ is made of two small pieces of flesh similar to papillae, concave, spongy and suspended towards the brain. It has a little lid that opens and closes by means of inspiration and expiration. This organ is by nature hot and without any odour, so that it can receive all odours.<sup>2</sup>

This proximity to the brain, the seat of the soul, somehow made smell a noble sense. Indeed the biblical scene of God breathing life into Adam was described and represented as happening

through the nose (Genesis 11:7, see illus. 51). Similarly, in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, Orlando's lost wit is finally brought back in a hermetic bottle and recovered, if not reinserted, through nasal inhalation.<sup>3</sup> The vaporous and subtle objects of smell somehow contributed to its assumed innocence. Christian moralists did condemn the vanity of perfumes, but they seem to have been far less worried by smell as a generator of sins than by the other senses.<sup>4</sup> References to the stench of Hell and the fragrance of Paradise are not infrequent, but smell is particularly interesting in so far as its depicted opposites are different from its textual and cultural opposites.<sup>5</sup> This phenomenon is such that, in images, oppositions between fragrance and stench are not aligned with good and bad, chastity and promiscuity, but with life and death. As we shall see, Venus and the Virgin share the same fragrant floral attribute, the rose. Their opposite, i.e., the representation of stench, is usually related to the life threatening fetor emanating from decaying bodies.

### Scattered flowers

Early modern artists indicated good smell in images in two ways. The first, adopted by the allegorical tradition, is a female figure holding one or several flowers near her nose (see illus. 51). The second is an abundance of flowers, scattered, disposed on the ground, arranged as friezes, or falling from above. This motif circulates across the real world and that of artistic and literary fiction from Homeric times. The Homeric Dawn scattering flowers over the world may well be one of the oldest Western expressions of this topos that still survives.

Sensations rarely occur in isolation. The formula of Dawn with rosy fingers, for instance, includes the intimate tactile dimension of scented fingertips rubbed in scented flowers.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore flowers are common to allegories of sight and smell, since they are carriers of the main object of these two senses: scent and colour.

Many subjects, sacred and profane, provide opportunities for scattering images of flowers over a canvas. We could begin with the springtime wind, Zephyrus, with his sweet-scented breath



72 Sandro Botticelli, detail from the *Birth of Venus*, c. 1482, tempera on canvas.

expressed by flowers blown in the air. The motif features in illuminations and engravings. Its best known version is probably Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, where on the left-hand side Zephyrus and his wife Cloris blow towards Venus and envelop her with their perfumed breath, indicated by the thirty or so roses depicted from thirty different points of view (illus. 72).<sup>7</sup>

The topos of scattered flowers belongs to the season of spring as much as to the permanent springtime of the *locus amoenus*, the ideal landscape of Western art and literature.<sup>8</sup> Its textual evocations include a fresh brook, as well as a bed of soft grass with many sweet-perfumed and multicoloured flowers. Particularly



suitable for amorous embraces, the *locus amoenus* shares this floral theme with many domestic beds.<sup>9</sup> The passage from a natural to a domestic bed was probably made possible by the Song of Solomon, which unfolds on a bed of flowers, often illustrated very literally by flowers strewn on its sheets (illus. 73).<sup>10</sup>

There is not much evidence that Renaissance people slept on flower petals, stems and twigs in a space of high tactile sensitivity where today even biscuit crumbs can prove disproportionately disruptive. It seems that they simply represented flowers as signs of pleasant smells. Indeed we know that they enjoyed sleeping and dreaming in floral scent, which they believed brought comfort to the brain. In his autobiography the sculptor and goldsmith Benvenuto Cellini remembers preparing his bed with flowers brought to him every morning.<sup>11</sup> Perfumed beds also feature in the domestic universe of vernacular short stories, in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, or in Giovan Francesco Straparola's *Piacevoli Notti* (1549) where a young

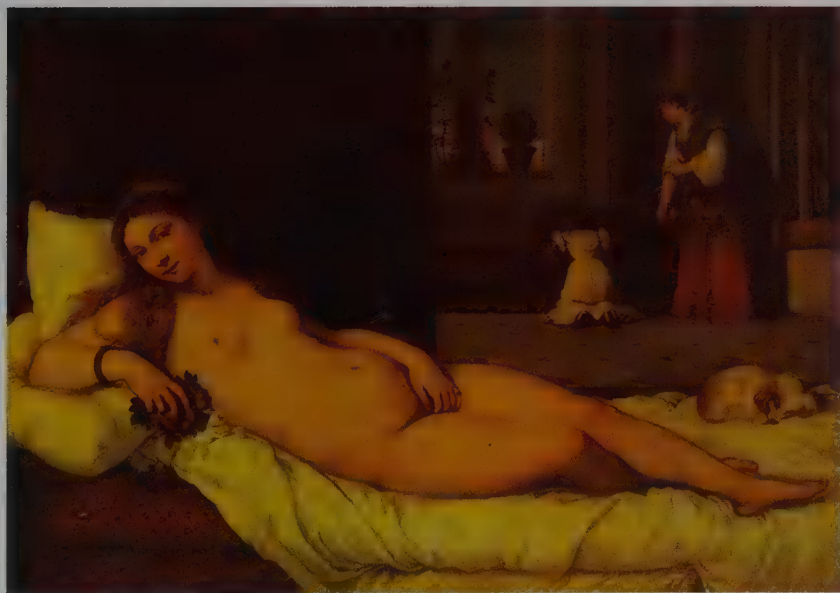


73 Detail from  
a woodcut of  
*The Song of Songs*,  
c. 1465.



servant prepares the king's bed with 'roses, violets and other scented flowers mixed with Cyprus birds and other scents which were pleasantly exhaling and were of much comfort to the brain'.<sup>12</sup> Cyprus birds were bird-shaped lumps of scented paste, sometimes covered with feathers, sometimes hollow and filled with aromatic powders.<sup>13</sup> The same literature provides indications on soaking rose petals with various perfumes to fill cushions and mattresses.<sup>14</sup> In fact many flower petals hardly smell at all, at least in my experience, but they were used and represented as carriers of perfume.

Titian's so-called *Venus of Urbino* rests on a mattress with a floral motif suggestive of such rose-filled cushions (illus. 74).<sup>15</sup> She is rubbing and scattering roses with the fingers of her right hand while she dips the fingertips of her left hand in her pudenda – another particularly scented zone of her body which we are seemingly invited to compare in olfactory and tactile terms with the roses held in the other hand. Titian may well have represented Dawn with rosy fingers as would be suggested not only by her scented fingertips but also by the yellow stripes, at the bottom of



74 Titian, *The Venus of Urbino*, 1538, oil on canvas.

the sky, visible through the window on the right hand side. For the first forty years of its existence, the painting is known through documents simply as *La bella*.<sup>16</sup> The identity of the model, who may have been called Aurora, matters far less than her expected effect on the male imagination through a convocation of olfactory and tactile imagination.

Recent research has suggested that such pictures would normally hang in bedchambers, above the bed, and were consequently visible during the act of procreation. Titian's olfactory allusions should alert us to the continuity between the perfumes evoked in the image and those of a scented bed.<sup>17</sup>

Rose petals and scent also belong to the world of epithalamia, verses in praise of marriage. According to one commentator, Titian represented the young spouse waiting in the nuptial chamber. The gesture of her left hand would suggest that she is following precepts enumerated by St Antoninus, bishop of Florence, intended to stimulate the dampness essential for procreation.<sup>18</sup> The implicit olfactory association between the scent of the two hands does not seem to have been picked up by art historical literature. It has however already been observed as a banality by an anthropologist, and is also a commonplace for biologists who recognize the erotic and communicative character of such scents in humans as well as in mammals.<sup>19</sup> Similar testimonies are however quite unusual in literature. One exception is the Italian polymath Luca Contile who, in his *Discorso . . . sopra li cinque Sensi del Corpo* of 1552, describes the organ of smell in scientific terms and observes that it is through this organ 'that the sweetness of scented things passes to the soul, and most importantly (*massimamente*) those of the beloved woman, of whom the delicate body respiring natural odours, gently entertains the inflamed amorous spirits of her lover.'<sup>20</sup>

Scattered flowers are also part of banqueting and feasting. They featured in the entertainments provided by Nero in the Domus Aurea where, according to Suetonius, the ivory ceiling of the banqueting hall opened to release flowers and perfumes on guests.<sup>21</sup> We encounter scattered flowers in Bartolommeo Platina's dietetic manual, *De honestate Voluptate*, which recommends



75 Giulio Romano, *The Horae Scattering Flowers on the Table of the Gods*, 1526–7, fresco.

scattering seasonal flowers on banquet tables.<sup>22</sup> In winter, when flowers are not available, he suggests using herbs. A century later Cristoforo di Messisbugo, cook to the Gonzaga, recommends fresh flowers in season and silk imitations soaked with essential oils in winter.<sup>23</sup>

In the visual arts this theme applies to most images of profane and sacred banquets. Renaissance representations of pagan banquets frequently include the scattering of flowers and scattered flowers on the table of the feasting pagan gods – for example in the versions of Raphael or of Giulio Romano at the Palazzo del Te, Mantua (illus. 75). The theme circulates from Pagan to Christian tables. It appears frequently in the wedding at Cana as well as on the table that the angels prepare for Christ. By the seventeenth century depicting scattered flowers has become part of the official iconography of Christ served by angels.<sup>24</sup>

## Stench

While good scent is signified by flowers, stench is usually represented by a figure pinching his nose near a dead body. It occurs mostly in the Raising of Lazarus from early Christian times onwards. A fresco of c. 1085 at Sant'Angelo in Formis, near Capua, makes the point (illus. 76). A swaddled Lazarus gazes dreamily at Christ. He is surrounded by two figures pinching their nose as they undo the swaddling ribbons presumably releasing the stench of his formerly dead body. The nose-pinching figure, sometimes assisted or replaced by a figure bringing a piece of cloth to mask the nose and the mouth, develops through the various styles that mark several centuries of Christian iconography. By the Renaissance, the Raising of Lazarus provided the occasion for depicting a range of emotions, expressions, movements and feelings prompted by the miracle. In Romanino's version of 1521–4 (San Giovanni Evangelista, Brescia), for instance, the resurrection generates amongst its witnesses emotions and gestures of marvel, admiration and piety as well as a nose-pinching reaction to stench (illus. 77).

From the mid-fourteenth century onwards, the nose-pinching figure also appears in the new genre of plague iconography prompted by the sad reality of the epidemics that raged over Europe from the late 1340s well into the eighteenth century.<sup>25</sup> The most influential Renaissance version is that of Raphael, disseminated through the engraving of Marcantonio Raimondi (illus. 78). The so-called *morbetto* (literally the 'little plague' as the plate measures only 195 x 248 mm) represents an episode of the *Aeneid* (111, 140f). It features a very interesting detail located on the side of the image. Not only does one man pinch his nose, but with his free hand he pushes away a child attempting to suckle milk from the infected body of a dead mother. Raphael has reinforced this prompt for imagining stench by the reaction of the figure placed immediately behind, whose hand seems to feel the air. Apart from setting the emotional and sensory tone of the image, this detail provides another example that repulsion to stench is learned rather than innate.<sup>26</sup>



76 *The Raising of Lazarus*, detail above, c. 1085, on a fresco in the nave of S. Angelo in Formis, Capua.







77 Girolamo Romanino, *The Raising of Lazarus*, 1521–4, oil on canvas.

As discussed in chapter Seven on touch, images of plague generally concealed visible aspects of the disease, preferring indirect signs of its violent sensory impact, either through one metonymic bubo or many arrows, or through a figure pinching his nose indicating ambient stench and contamination in line with early modern beliefs on the role of air in the transmission of diseases. Thus, very much like tactile signs, olfactory signs are suitable means for signifying the presence of aspects of the visible world deemed unsuitable for representation. This association of death with the threatening emanation of the decaying body sets the fundamental polarity of good and bad smell in terms of danger and safety, life and death.

This opposition, however, involves some asymmetries since the forces of life and creation are personified by Venus and the Virgin who share the same floral and olfactive attributes but are

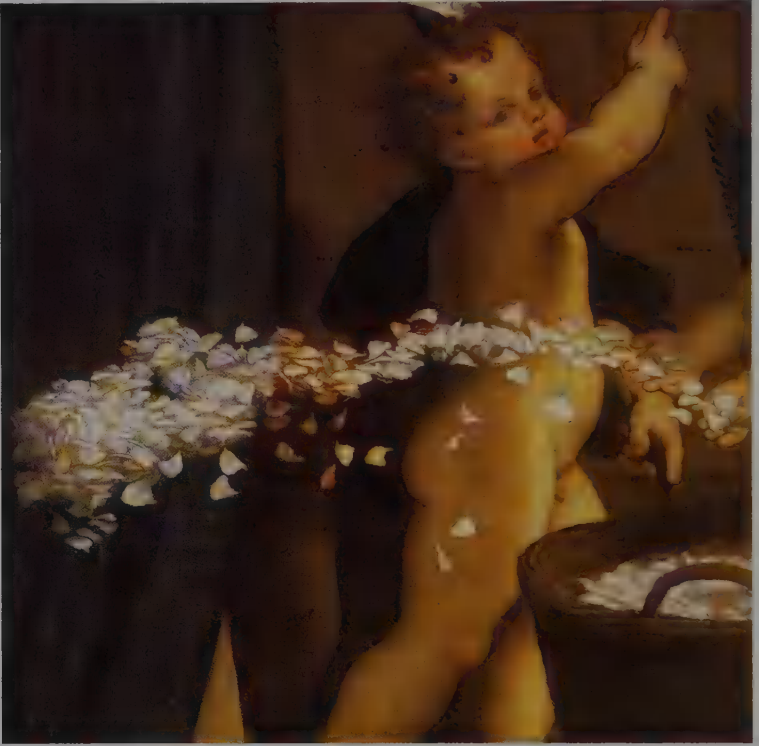


otherwise incarnations of the complex oppositions between chastity and sexuality. Beds strewn with flowers are nevertheless shared by the Virgin, Venus and even the Christ Child, who is sometimes shown sleeping on a bed of flowers. Rosy fingers are shared by the Venus of Urbino and rosary recitants who perfume their hands while handling their moist scented beads. These perhaps unusual juxtapositions have probable neurological roots. The dissociation between cultural and olfactory opposites may well reflect the dissociation between the processors of smell and those of language and speech. They follow different routes to the brain and are processed in opposite hemispheres: olfactory impressions in the right hemisphere, language and speech in the left.<sup>27</sup> This may partly explain why smell and visual signs of smell offer an ideal space in which to express the presence of things deemed unsuitable for graphic visualization. This presumed innocence made smell the least censored sense.

The pictorial consequences of the status of smell are also particularly noteworthy. Scattered flowers generate a particular type



78 Marcantonio Raimondi, *The Plague*, 1515–16, engraving.



79 Lorenzo Lotto, detail from the *Virgin of the Rosary*, 1539 (see illus. 19).

of aerial perspective where flowers serve as markers, constraining the brain to imagine space between and around them. Such space is one of unusual artistic freedom where the painter can dispose and arrange colours in the air, or on a table, as he wishes. Bringing this theme further, Lorenzo Lotto, in the *Madonna of the Rosary* (illus. 19), blurred the line between the world of the viewer and that of the picture by the scented floral throw (illus. 79), thus creating some olfactory chiaroscuro.

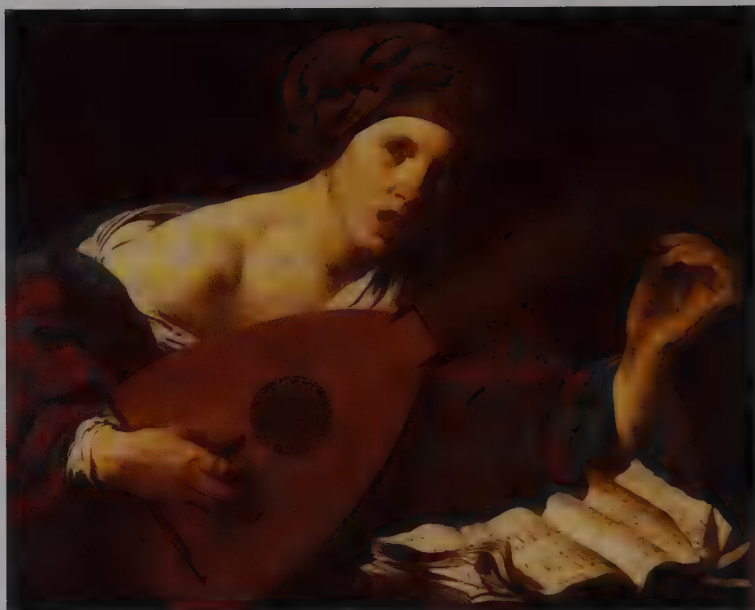
## 9 Sound



### Sound tuning in late medieval and Renaissance art

The polarity of sight and hearing, image and speech, and their variations across time and space, are paradigms of culture and civilization. In the Renaissance these two major senses stood out in the controversy initiated by the Reformers, according to whom predication and the printed word, not images, should be the means of apprehending and transmitting a religion revealed by the word.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless the controversy concerned only images in the context of worship, not images in general. In the Netherlands even the Calvinists who expelled the figurative arts from churches tolerated their presence in the secular world. This situation benefited the expansion of secular imagery to the extent that various figures belonging to the familiar repertoire of sensory prompts in pre-Reformation Christian art eventually migrated from religious to genre painting. One such migrating sensory prompt, the tuning figure, is the subject of this chapter.

Tuning figures circulate across genres, from psalters to altarpieces to southern pastoral landscapes and northern venal scenes (illus. 80). They form an impressive and varied genealogy of characters, angels, musicians, personifications, sex workers and even one biblical king, quite literally inviting whoever passes through the rays of their gaze to tune in. They are sometimes set against natural and cultural sonic contraries. Natural contraries include perceptions of intensity or loudness, ranging from the threshold of audibility to that of pain, and perception of pitch, from bass to treble.<sup>2</sup> More culturally based contraries are, for



80 Hendrick Terbrugghen, *Woman Tuning a Lute to her Voice*, c. 1624–6, oil on canvas.

instance, pairs of antithetical instruments or families of instruments: brass versus strings; bagpipe versus lyre (see illus. 40).

By the sixteenth century figures tuning a stringed instrument appear as allegories of hearing, usually with the ear turned towards the vibrating string (see illus. 50). Thus the iconographic antecedents of Hendrick Terbrugghen's venal lute player of c. 1624–6 (illus. 80) are not only personifications but also tuning angels from Central Italian altarpieces and even King David, tuning his harp in the upper or lower loop of the illuminated B of the words *Beatus vir*, the first verse of the Book of Psalms. Like her ancestors, Terbrugghen's figure tunes her instrument. The fingers of her left hand indicate that she is plucking a bass string with the thumb, while her index finger activates the treble string of which she is adjusting the pitch – her right hand is holding one of the treble pegs. Her open mouth suggests that she is producing sound. Thus we are prompted to imagine the near harmony of three

sounds and pitches: the bass string, the voice and the treble string, about to reach or reaching the correct pitch.

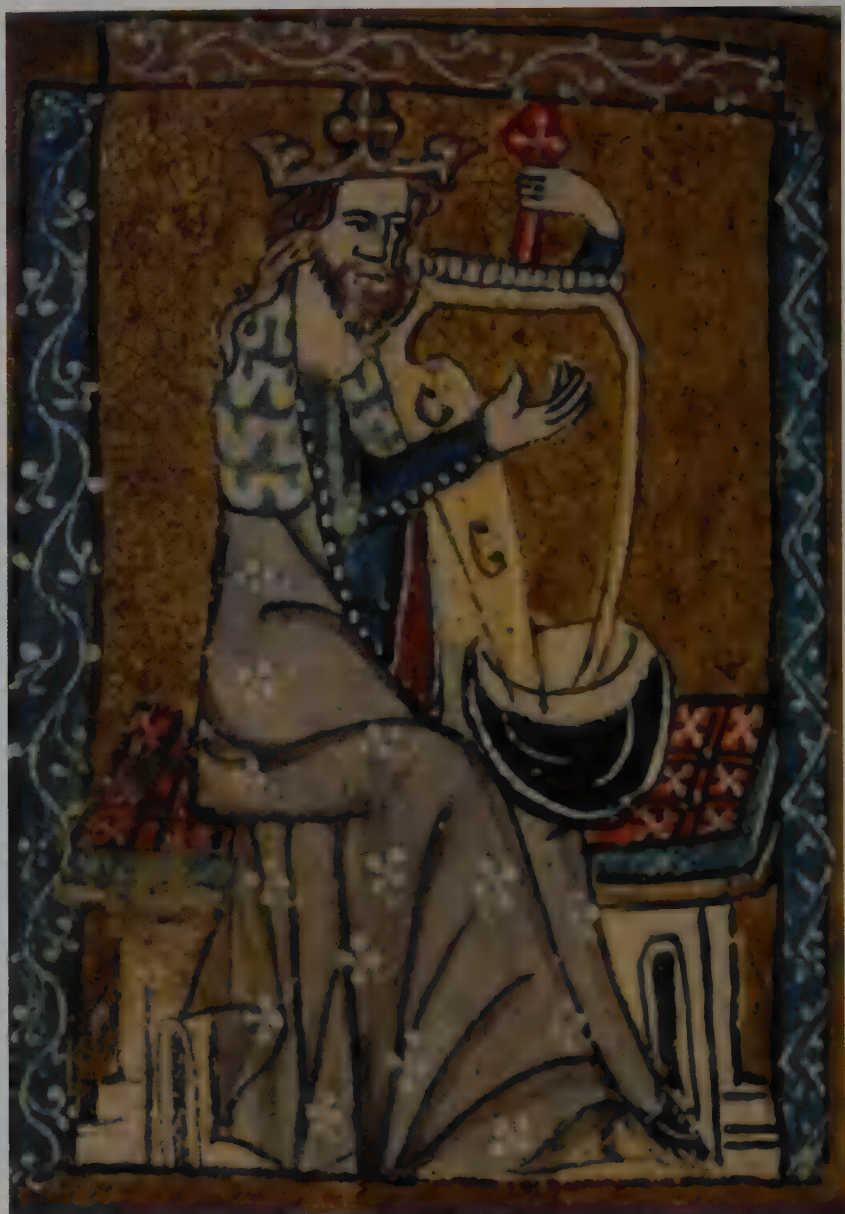
The sixteenth century is indeed a very musical one, with a noticeable increase in the ownership of domestic instruments and in particular of lutes.<sup>3</sup> Thus tuning must have been a familiar matter. The question, then, is what is the function of the tuning figure outside the allegorical context? If she belongs to the iconographic family of sensory prompts, what is she prompting the viewer to think, imagine or do?

Ancient art left images of mythical musicians such as Orpheus and Amphion playing, but not tuning, a stringed instrument. In post-Classical art, the first character consistently shown tuning is King David. The biblical king is frequently depicted with a harp which he holds or plays. The specific iconography of David tuning, however, is an invention rather than an illustration of any specific passage that appears in Carolingian Bibles. From the twelfth to the fourteenth century it is repeated to the point of becoming a stereotype. An illumination from an English fourteenth-century psalter provides a standard example.<sup>4</sup> David holds his instrument against his lap; his left hand grasps a large red tuning peg. The strings of the harp have disappeared in the gold background – or perhaps were never painted. Nevertheless the illustrator has depicted the fingers of the right hand as if they were plucking two strings, the treble string that is being tuned and a lower bass string (illus. 81).

The multifaceted iconography of King David has benefited from extensive scholarly scrutiny. We have some idea of the kind of harp depicted in medieval illustrations and we know that these were tuned with pegs.<sup>5</sup> Scholars have proposed that the image of David tuning stands as a prefiguration of Christ/Logos ordering the macrocosm.<sup>6</sup>

Approaching the motif in terms of its function rather than its general symbolic meaning, and examining the relationship of this figure to the text it illustrates, suggests a different interpretation. Although David is represented in many ways, at many stages of his life – from the young slayer of Goliath to the grey-haired psalmist – he seems to be tuning mostly in psalters. In





81 Detail of *King David Tuning his Harp*, from a 14th-century psalter, colour on parchment with gold background.



this narrower context he features generally on the first initial of the first Psalm, the B of *Beatus Vir*.<sup>7</sup> This placing is consistent in manuscripts separated by time and space, even if Psalm I does not contain any typological allusions or references to music, sound or celestial harmony. It only speaks of the bliss of the man who follows the law of Yahweh.

The placement of the image may reveal some of its literal meaning. To anyone even remotely familiar with the practice of music, tuning is the first thing one does before playing. It is a mental preparation, which involves tuning an instrument as much as tuning oneself with the instrument in attentive readiness for the forthcoming performance. Thus it would seem that the consistent presence of David tuning in the first letter and sometimes on the cover of many psalters is a prompt to the user to get ready and mentally tune to the psalm through the harp of their singer composer. Since psalms were sung, the image stands as a visible prompt to get ready for psalmody.<sup>8</sup> Psalters are not always stand-alone books, they are also part of the Bible. In this context the image of David tuning became emblematic of the beginning of the Book of Psalms and subject to instant recognition to anyone flipping the pages of a Bible.

Even if David composed and sang the psalms, very few artists depicted him tuning to his voice. In medieval illuminations he is at most smiling or grinning. Thus the version of the Florentine painter Lorenzo Monaco (c. 1370–1425), in which the king tunes the strings of a psaltery with an open mouth, may be an innovation. If we follow Aristotle's definition that 'voice is a kind of sound characteristic of what has soul',<sup>9</sup> this addition is a prompt to imagine sound with soul. It could have been inspired by similar figures that began appearing in religious and profane painting from the fourteenth century onwards (illus. 82).

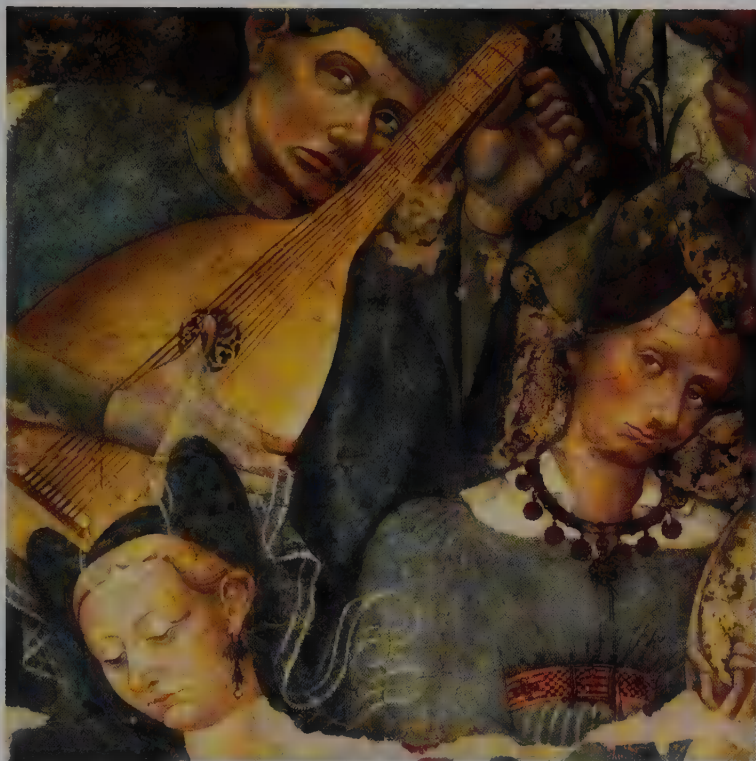
Prompting the viewer to change tone from the plucked strings of a *fête champêtre* to the scream of Death is probably the purpose of the tuner of the mid-fifteenth century Palermo *Triumph of Death* (illus. 83). He presses his instrument against his head, presumably to hear and feel the vibration of the string. The thumb indicates that he plucks a bass string and the tuning peg shows that he is tuning a treble string. Indifferent to anatomical accuracy,



82 Lorenzo Monaco, *King David Tuning his Harp*, c. 1408–10, tempera on wood with a gold ground.

he seems to have one ear turned towards and hidden by the instrument, and the other, almost painted in profile, oriented towards the viewer as if to request auditory attention. In the sonic universe of the fresco, the lute tuner joins two opposite registers: the pastoral scene of the upper register where a harpist plucks to the rhythm of the ornamental splashes of water dripping from a fountain, and the lower register with its arrow-stricken corpses. Furthermore the tuner is an intermediary between the scream of Death's horse and the concert scene.

In secular art the theme is a favourite of *concerts champêtres*. We encounter it in a delightful version of Palma Vecchio, where



83 *Triumph of Death*,  
c. 1450, anonymous  
fresco, with detail  
above.

a dreamy young man sits against a tree on the border of the image, plucking the highest and lowest strings of a *lira da braccio* and tuning presumably to the voice of two female singers. Like the tuning King David, Palma's tuner functions as a hinge between the viewer and the content of the image. In religious art angels, as we shall now see, play a very similar function binding the world of the image to that of the viewer.

### Tuning angels

Tuning angels are younger than King David, since scholars date their first appearance in painting from the time of Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Maestà* (c. 1338).<sup>10</sup> There they play four different instruments and one angel, holding a psaltery, is presumably tuning.<sup>11</sup> Musician angels are indeed very common in late medieval and Renaissance altarpieces. Many live at the bottom of the image, near the border, sometimes playing, sometimes tuning and frequently establishing eye contact.<sup>12</sup>

Vasari noticed tuning angels in his *Lives* of Masaccio, Signorelli and Fra Bartolommeo. The longest mention is a description of a lost *St Bartholomew* altarpiece by Fra Bartolommeo. Vasari's description evokes another altarpiece of 1499 by Bartolommeo Montagna (1450–1523), with the Madonna and Child with saints Andrew, Monica, Ursula and Sigismund (illus. 84). Montagna's version includes a tuning angel gazing at us with the ear turned towards his instrument. He tunes a mid-range string but plucks the bass and the treble strings, presumably providing octaves below and above. The tuner is part of a group of three, all shown in a state of attentive listening to one another. It is precisely this aspect that Vasari emphasized in Fra Bartolommeo's *Bartholomew* altarpiece. The passage deserves full quotation as it highlights three main functions of the tuning figure: to represent sound, to represent attention to sound and voice, and to represent air:

two children who are playing, one on a lute, and the other on a lyre, one of whom he made with a leg drawn up and his instrument resting upon it, and with the hands touching the strings in the act of running over them, an ear



84 Bartolommeo Montagna, detail from *Madonna and Child with SS Andrew, Monica, Ursula, and Sigismund*, 1499, oil on panel.



intent on the harmony, the head upraised, and the mouth slightly open, in such a way that whoever beholds him cannot persuade himself that he should not also hear the voice. No less lifelike is the other, who, leaning on one side, and bending over with one ear to the lyre, appears to be listening to learn how far it is in accord with the sound of the lute and the voice, while, with his eyes fixed on the ground, and his ear turned intently towards his companion, who is playing and singing, he seeks to follow in harmony with the air.<sup>13</sup>

The theme of attention to sound, which Vasari also observed in other contexts, is indeed implicit in the representation of tuning. One of its most interesting versions is the *St Peter Martyr* altarpiece of Cima da Conegliano (illus. 85).<sup>14</sup> We know the circumstance of the commission but no document accounts for the presence of a tuning angel at the bottom of the image. Cima did place musician angels in other altarpieces, near the lower border, but these are all playing, with the exception of one, just about to



85 Cima da Conegliano, detail from the *St Peter Martyr* altarpiece.





86 Cima da Conegliano, *St Peter Martyr* altarpiece, 1505–6, oil on panel.

play, producing a delightful sonic loop of anticipatory silence.<sup>15</sup> In the *St Peter Martyr* altarpiece the tuning child identified as an angel by tradition, but clearly wingless, sits at eye level and seeks eye contact, the head turned towards the viewer and one ear oriented towards the vibrating string. The vertical neck of his *lira da braccio* leads the eye to the foot of the monumental figure of the Dominican saint who characteristically bears a sword planted on his head.<sup>16</sup>

Behind the angel is a landscape. On the right-hand side a tortuous ascending path leads to a church and some mountains, on the left-hand side Cima has created a flat landscape with a village on the banks of a lake and a shepherd playing the bagpipes in front of a dog. The bagpiper works as a sensory contrary to the harmony of the tuning child's *lira*. This opposition between the celestial music of the stringed instrument and the earthy music of the bagpipe appears frequently in illustrations of the episode of Apollo and Marsyas.<sup>17</sup> The contrast also occurs in psalters, in the antithetical language of marginalia, where in one example a bagpiper plays in the bottom margin near the B of *Beatus Vir* that houses David tuning.<sup>18</sup> In Cima's altarpiece the two musical figures are not necessarily antithetical; on the contrary they may well be analogical. The landscape may be moralized. The right-hand side signifies the arduous path of virtue while the left refers to earthly pleasures.<sup>19</sup> But this structure of oppositions may also leave room for one of sonic symmetries involving the viewer. The image of the dog listening to the bagpiper starts to make sense if we bring into the equation the viewer, himself attentively looking and listening to the tuning angel. Following the example of the good dog listening to his shepherd with obedient attention, the viewer must listen to the music of the angel and contemplate the Dominican saint. Thus instead of oppositions we have two 'paths' to reach the central image of the saint, one ascending to the right-hand landscape, towards a church and the blue mountains that touch the robes of the saint, another through listening to the tuning angel in imitation of the obedient and attentive dog.

Such a canine analogy, not devoid of humour, is quite fitting to an image celebrating a Dominican saint, since Dominicans

described and defined themselves through the Latin pun: *Domini cane* – dogs of the Lord. Assuming that the position of the dog is one of attention and obedience, we can again observe that sensory prompts are not only signs of sensations but depictions of attention to sensation.

Altarpieces are usually positioned quite high up. This one measures 330 x 216 cm, thus the horizon and the eyes of the angel are more or less at a level with the viewer. In the presence of the real image, looking upward requires a change of posture, bending back the spine, tilting the head back. Changes in posture involve changes of viewpoints. Unlike viewing a flat 10 cm photographic reproduction, looking up at over 3 metres of painted surface skews and accentuates the unreal column-like volume and monumentality of the saint framed by the sky.

Thus space works in two ways: at eye level depth and distance are mediated by the contrast of size between the foreground and the background, further enhanced by the opposition between the closeness of the tuning figure and the distant bagpiper. A 'second' space occurs when one's gaze ascends along the vertical axis of the picture, skewing the elongated effigy of the saint against the blue sky. The tuning angel is in this respect a preparation for this perceptual shift.

Delight in the looping temporality of images of tuning, as well as in the art of arranging sound in space, may well have inspired Lionello Spada (1576–1622) to depict the moment when various musicians adjust their instruments and circulate the scores before an intimate performance (illus. 87). In the so-called *Concert* of c. 1615–20 (Rome, Galleria Borghese) two tuning musicians occupy two sides of the table around which a man in blue distributes scores. The violinist at the front and the theorbo player at the back are adjusting instruments producing the highest and lowest pitches of the band. They provide indications for associations of pitch and space: treble at the front, bass at the back. On the transverse axis are silent yet opposite signs of wind instruments in terms of pitch and of material: trombone and recorder.

By setting his composition between the close treble and the distant bass Spada's *Concert* extends the imaginative requirements



87 Lionello Spada, *The Concert*, c. 1615, oil on canvas.

of the tuning figure from two sounds – one bass, one treble – to various opposites in terms of pitch, material and intensity. This may be a prompt to think not only in terms of sound, but to exercise the imagination of pitch and harmony.

Thus the world of sonic contraries opposes loud and soft, brass and strings. The art of tuning the voice to the lute is shared and practised by images of angels and courtesans. Regardless of whether it precedes sex or psalmody, the iconography of tuning is one of preparation, and the tuning figure is another hinge that brings the world of the picture into the mind of the viewer.

Like scattered flowers, tuning figures circulate across genres. They are often placed on the border of the image, a space frequently occupied by sensory prompts. Similar in this respect to the maids preparing and testing the water of a bathtub, the image of tuning represents not only a sensation but a figure in a state of attentiveness to a continuous sensation. While sounds are by definition temporal and ephemeral, the tuning figure, on the contrary, suggests a permanent note, a continuous sound, an ambient chord,

comparable to the drone of Indian classical music and the *bourdon* of early modern Western music.<sup>20</sup>

The fundamentals of auditory physiology have changed less than those of the other senses. Sound still travels through air. In early modern physiology it activates the surface of the inner ear, compared to the stretched skin of a drum, before reaching the common sense by means of animal spirits running through the auditory nerve.<sup>21</sup> In modern neuroscience these vibrations pass through the outer, middle and inner ear, which translates exterior signals into neural information.<sup>22</sup> From either angle, representing sound forces the mind to imagine the space without which sound cannot exist.



88 Jusepe Ribera, *Taste*, c. 1615, oil on canvas.



# Banquets



Aristotle provided many intellectual paradigms to the West but not everything he wrote was necessarily influential. One such example is a development in the treatise *On Sense and Sensible Objects* comparing flavours to colours in terms of bitter and sweet, harsh, pungent, astringent and sharp.<sup>1</sup>

Even if Italian painting and gastronomy rose to pre-eminence during the Renaissance, these analogies never circulated in artistic literature.<sup>2</sup> Taste and cookery were far too humble to elicit comparison with painting. This is hardly surprising given the low ranking of taste in the hierarchy of the senses.<sup>3</sup> The spiritual nobility granted to sight and hearing never extended to the lower bodily senses. This humble status is perhaps best expressed by the series of the five senses by the Spanish Neapolitan painter Jusepe Ribera, in which a gentleman holding a telescope stands for Sight and a plump peasant eating pasta embodies Taste (illus. 88, 89). Not only was taste a modest sense, artists rarely represented eating – with the exception of course of low-life scenes. It has been pointed out that most images of the Fall suggest, rather than show, the consumption of the forbidden fruit – it is touched rather than consumed.<sup>4</sup> This observation also applies to most representations of banquets, dinners, lunches and picnics, where the guests interact, are about to eat or to drink, sometimes drink but rarely masticate with puffed-up cheeks, in spite of the abundance of food sometimes surrounding them.

Unlike the four other senses, which provide a constant flow of information about the world, taste is only stimulated in the context

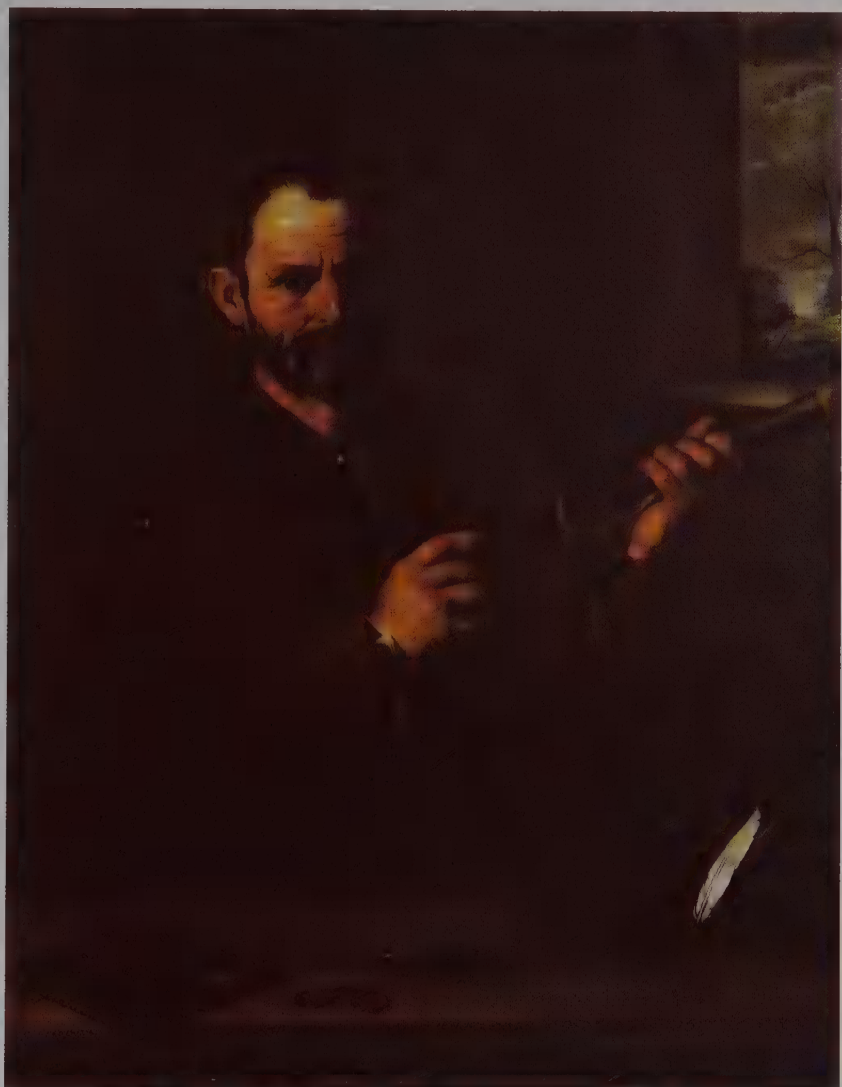
of nutrition, an activity more often evoked than represented. Nevertheless the most formal occasion for preparation, display and consumption of food, the princely banquet, reached its apogee from the last quarter of the fifteenth century onwards.<sup>5</sup> By the early sixteenth century the princely banquet had become an art of orchestration and display, through the works of the finest cooks, draughtsmen, goldsmiths and musicians, of anything comestible produced by nature. Such a situation undoubtedly inspired the painter and theoretician Federico Zuccaro (1542–1609) to write an extensive parallel between the noble art of painting and that of organizing banquets under the headings of judgement, good taste, lucidity (*chiaro intelletto*) and, above all, of variety and abundance.<sup>6</sup>

Since Renaissance banquets addressed all the senses, their literary and visual remains are particularly loquacious witnesses of the application of Renaissance ideals to the entire sensorium. The most prominent categories guiding their conception and description are the characteristic concepts of imitation and the twin category of variety and abundance.

Accounts of Renaissance banquets have survived through images of banquet scenes from religious and profane subjects, and through texts from festival books, correspondences and descriptions by the organizers themselves. Banquets have also left an important material culture including precious tableware and silverware, sometimes designed by mainstream artists from Raphael to Bernini. Thus, collating images with the accounts of three important Renaissance banqueting masters, Cristoforo di Messisbugo, Vincenzo Cervio and Bartolommeo Scappi, we will examine the main sensory aspects of imitation and of variety and abundance as they featured on Renaissance princely tables.<sup>7</sup>

### Variety and abundance

The origins of variety and abundance are mythological. Abundance, or *copia*, in particular is believed to be an etymological outgrowth of the Roman goddess Ops, emblematic of material riches and natural plenty.<sup>8</sup> It is a Latin concept frequently associated with the Classical rhetorical tradition. Its application to writing and



89 Jusepe Ribera, *Sight*, c. 1615, oil on canvas.

discourse was further developed with much brio by Erasmus in his *De copia* of 1512. Variety and abundance were understood as essential attributes of nature, transferable and recognizable in eloquence as in many other fields, but three canonical examples stand out: images, music and food.

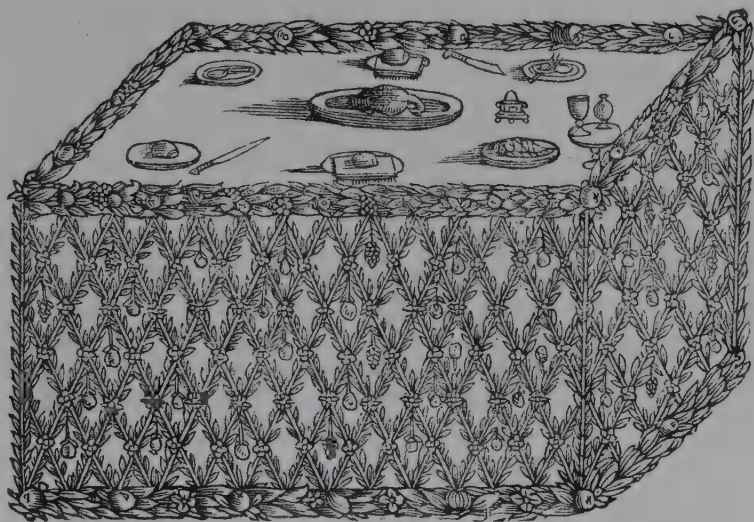
Such a theme already features in Alberti's *Della Pittura*, where he invokes the innate pleasure humans take in variety and abundance in music and food and recommends to painters to adopt great variety in their figures since 'the first thing that causes pleasure in a painting is abundance in itself and the variety of things'.<sup>9</sup> The figurative arts express variety and abundance by means of figures of different gender, age and social status revealing various emotions. These images are part of the vast display of variety and abundance set in motion by Renaissance princely banquets.

### Sounds and perfumes

Cristoforo di Messisbugo's treatise on banqueting, *Banchetti, Composizioni di Vivande e Apparecchio generale* (Ferrara, 1549) begins with a seven-page list of the raw materials, tools and human resources necessary to coordinate a princely banquet. The next thirty pages introduce descriptions of banquets followed by more than three hundred recipes.

The first fundamental element of variety and abundance regards food itself. Depending on the size of a banquet, and the number of courses, the list of food served from the entrées to the dessert covers most comestible products of nature at a given season. This material is orchestrated into courses, set to musical and olfactory accompaniments.

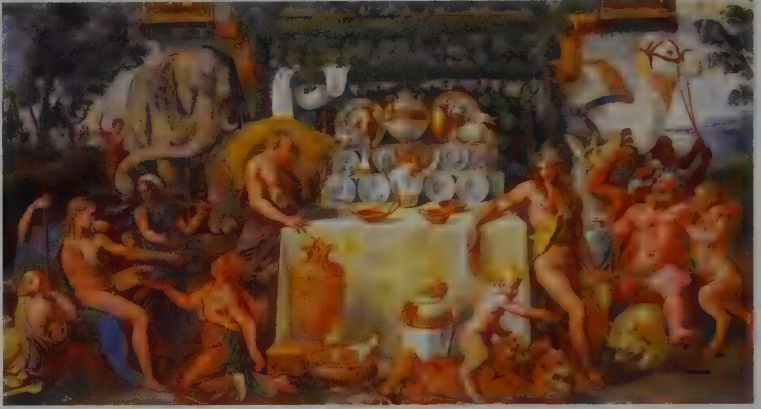
Music is particularly present; indeed it was believed that music facilitated digestion. Most representations of banquets include some musicians.<sup>10</sup> Vincenzo Cervio, author of a manual on carving that includes extensive banqueting descriptions, gave much thought to their placement. On one occasion he disposed four choirs, one on each corner of the banqueting hall. They produced perfect harmony, he writes, in spite of the occasional sonic challenge of the joyous breaking of crystal glasses.<sup>11</sup> In a banquet in



90 Scented panel from Vincenzo Cervio, *Il Trinciante* (Rome, 1593).

honour of Ercole d'Este, Cristoforo di Messisbugo synchronized music to twelve services, each of at least nine different dishes, from appetizers to salads, meat, fish, cheeses and sweets. He specifies the author, style, instruments, the number of soloists, and sometimes their clothes.<sup>12</sup> The mouth-baffling diversity of dishes makes it difficult to discern a distinct correspondence between the music and flavours of each service, although the variety of one conceivably echoes that of the other. Such music nevertheless had the broad dimension of accompanying everything comestible that nature produces.<sup>13</sup>

Between services, the guests received scented water for rinsing their hands. Outside these bursts of freshness, continuous scent often shadowed continuous sound. Napkins were perfumed and documents testify to the use of incense as well as natural and artificial flowers soaked in perfume.<sup>14</sup> For a marriage feast, Cervio recommends weaving boards of scented herbs and leaves such as laurel, rosemary, rose, cedar and sage, and setting these fragrant panels around the tables decorated with garlands of fruits (illus. 90).<sup>15</sup>



91 Giulio Romano, detail of a dresser service from a banquet scene, 1526, fresco in the Palazzo del Tè, Mantua.

One common feature of Renaissance banquets is the much appreciated art of folding napkins.<sup>16</sup> In his *Singolar dottrina* of 1560 the Florentine carver Domenico Romoli praised the marvellous folding (*piegatura mirabile*) of those who give napkins any shape they want. There were not only individual napkins but also sophisticated installations. Cervio mentions ten columns made of subtle napkins (*salviette sottilissime*) holding arches of flowers, leaves, pearls, corals and banderols with the coats of arms of the guests.<sup>17</sup> Another installation, for a wedding, was a castle of napkins with at the centre a fountain of rose water.<sup>18</sup> Beyond this barest monochrome expression of variety and abundance most of the visual display in banquets may be understood through the concept of imitation.

### Imitation

Imitation describes and qualifies the various processes taking place between perception and representation. During the Renaissance imitation had several layers of meaning which were further stratified from the 1550s onwards with the re-emergence of Aristotle's *Poetics*. Three main categories have been established in the literary field: imitation of a single model, synthesis and



transformation of several models and emulation.<sup>19</sup> The last two are particularly important in the Renaissance banquet. As we will see later, transformative imitation is in fact intrinsic to the production of the arts decorating the banqueting hall. Emulative imitation, frequently staged on the dresser service described below, occurs in two notable ways: rivalry with nature and rivalry between the arts.

Renaissance banquets invariably feature a dresser, or *credenza* (illus. 91). It is a set of shelves well in view of the main table, covered with fine cloths and displaying precious, rare and expensive wares. A good *credenza* is always well furnished with gilded cups, silverware, majolica and crystal.<sup>20</sup> It is a display of wealth in terms of the value of the work, but also that of the material. Relatively few examples of silverware survive as they were often melted down when their design went out of fashion, or their owner out of money. Indeed this specific class of gold or silver-based imagery literally gives form to wealth.

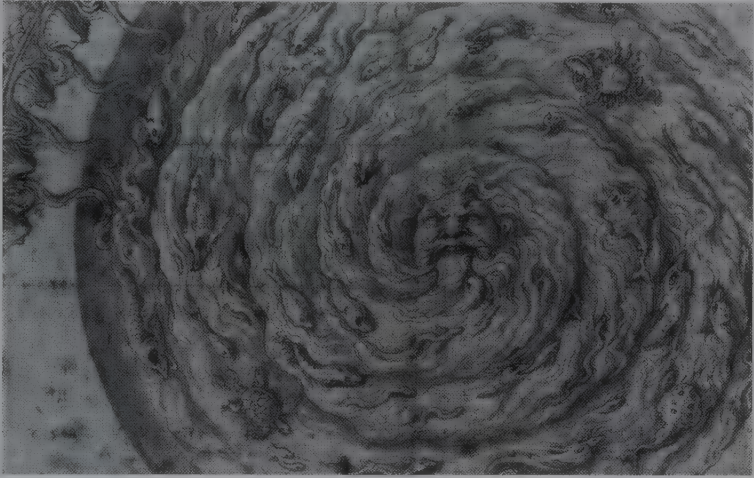
The most prized pieces of a dresser service were ewers and basins. These were often executed after the drawings of well-known artists. Raphael provided some sketches for basins, as did his best-known pupils, Perino del Vaga, Giovanni da Udine and Giulio Romano, and many of their contemporaries and successors, relayed in the following century by figures such as Bernini and Pietro da Cortona.<sup>21</sup> Unlike other tableware, ewers and basins are never touched by the guests. The heaviest and most expensive are simply displayed on the dresser, but some are used between courses by two servants, one holding the basin and the other pouring perfumed water onto the guests' hands.

Ewers and basins are particularly interesting representatives of Renaissance conceptions of imitation. The shape of ewers derives from classical models and has been associated with the feminine silhouette, as confirmed for instance by sketches by Perino del Vaga.<sup>22</sup> Ewers imitate the various shapes of water in three ways: their form, in particular their beak with its fluted elliptic border, evokes and shapes the curves of flowing water. Second, ewers represent water as rivers or seascapes and third, they generally feature stories from the lives of aquatic deities.



92 Francesco  
Salviati. *Ewer*,  
c. 1550. pen  
and ink.

The handles of ewers frequently include figures in relief producing striking tactile images. Salviati's design of the Three Graces pouring water sets the naked body of the standing figure in full longitudinal contact with the hand of the servant holding the handle (illus. 92). The candle-lit ambience of banquets surely enhanced these gilded and polished reflexive objects. When presented for rinsing hands, the movement of the scented water poured into the basin must have animated the images embossed, etched or inlaid on its gilded surface. This play on the elements is particularly conspicuous in many basins decorated with images



93 Giulio Romano, *Sketch for a Basin*, 1542, pen and ink with watercolour.

of waves, foam and splashes. Such is the case on the basin devised by Giulio Romano, where the mouth of Neptune engulfs a maelstrom of waves filled with various species of fish (illus. 93). Similarly a drawing for a basin by the Tuscan painter Francesco Salviati features the theme of the Fall of Phaeton, a chariot crashing into the sea in flames, and thus representing the two elements of water and fire that were destined to animate its surface in the banqueting hall (illus. 94).

This tendency to create movement in images is part of an obsession with lifelikeness which Renaissance banquets shared with the visual arts. We have seen this concept at play in the field of religious art, examined its roots in the training of the imagination, and observed some of its effects in artistic education and religious iconoclasm. Renaissance banquets present another facet of the multi-sensory relationship of the Renaissance with images.

The first basic level of lifelike imagery of banqueting tables is the tendency of presenting re-feathered birds. These included, according to Vincenzo Cervio, 'pheasants that looked alive, white peacocks re-feathered with the great wheel of their tail adorned with silk and gold ribbons of various colours and with long golden confetti . . . hanging from all around the birds which were



94 Francesco Salviati, design for a basin, c. 1550, pen and ink.

standing as if they were alive with scented wood burning in their beak and an amorous motto placed between their claws'.<sup>23</sup> In another passage Cervio describes the tail of such a bird as trembling (*tremolanti*).<sup>24</sup> A fair amount of food was gilded, and thus staged in imitation and comparison with the silverware and goldsmith's work of the dresser. Describing a table display, Cervio speaks of things all 'touched' with gold or silver (*cose tutte toche d'oro e d'argento*), including four peacocks, four roosters and four black eagles, all with silver claws.<sup>25</sup> He also lists rabbit pâtés in the shape of golden lions, thus contrasting the appearance of the most magnanimous animal with the tasty meat of the most pusillanimous.<sup>26</sup>

Food also took the shape of familiar secular images. The *apparecchio da tavola*, that is, the table display opening a feast, contains

much figurative food related to the occasion of the banquet. Fine examples are the majestic sugar column in the middle of the laden wedding table of Marcantonio Colonna or the sugar figures of the twelve Labours of Hercules featuring at each of the twelve courses of a banquet given by Ercole d'Este.<sup>27</sup> On the first service, Mesisbugo writes of 25 sugar statues which 'signified' the fight between Hercules and the Nemean lion, gilded and painted with a flesh that seemed alive.<sup>28</sup> Cervio describes another banquet opening with 'large salads worked in relief with various fantasies of animals made in lemon, beds of radish, castles of turnips, walls of limes, ornamented with fine slices of ham, fish pâtés, herrings, anchovies, capers, olives, caviar, flowers and other things already dressed; then came some game pies shaped like golden lions . . . three big statues of marzipan each four *palmi* high [about 1 metre], one of which was the horse of the Campidoglio, copied from the original, another was Hercules with the lion and another a unicorn with its horn in the mouth of a dragon'.<sup>29</sup>

A Friday afternoon snack organized by Bartolommeo Scappi made use of three groups of six statues. The first group, in sugar – Diana and her nymphs – introduces a set of salads; the second, sculpted in butter, features mixed subjects including a camel mounted by an Arabian king, an elephant with a castle on his back, a unicorn with its horn in the mouth of a snake. The last service came with a marzipan Judgment of Paris featuring the almond-flavoured figures of Paris, Minerva, Venus and Juno, all naked we are told, and Helen of Troy 'dressed with golden hair'.<sup>30</sup> Sugar figures were often laden with food and may well have been reused.<sup>31</sup> Marzipan figures of all sizes could be nibbled, as were so many of the figurative foods mixed with the seasonal variety and abundance of nature. This pervasiveness of variety and abundance through all sensory channels and across the arts is best expressed by the painter Federico Zuccaro, who observed that 'in the same way as nature is varied and abundant, so are the arts and so must be the accomplished painter'.<sup>32</sup>

This joyous mixture of comestible nature and culture suggests a relationship with the world better described by processes such as identification, projection and absorption than by the more



conventional subject/object model.<sup>33</sup> Such a relationship with the outside world is however eminently artificial. The sensory receptivity stimulated by banqueting marvels was also vulnerable to disruption. One of the most important etiquette books of its time, Giovanni della Casa's *Galateo* of 1550, asserts that the *raison d'être* of table manners is the sensitivity of the imagination and its capacity to produce movements of disgust and discomfort when confronted with representations of, or allusions to, unpleasant sensations. I quote from the 1576 English translation:

We say, then, that every act that offendeth any of the common senses, or overthwarteth a mans will an desire, or else presenteth to the imagination and conceit, matters unpleasant, and that likewise, which the mynde does abhorre; such things, I say bee naught and must not be used: for we must not only refraine from such thinges as be fowle, filthy, lothsome and nastie: but we must not so much as name them. And it is not only a fault to dooe such things, but against good maner, by any act or signe to put a man in minde of them.<sup>34</sup>

These words of Giovanni della Casa introduce a list of standard annoyances covering all the senses. Warnings against faux pas, such as sniffing the plates of others, hurried eating, open-mouthed chewing, spitting, loud sneezing, coughing and so on, are common to other Renaissance texts on table manners, such as Erasmus' *De civilitate morum puerorum* (1530), or Aretino's *Ragionamenti* (1534–6). The interest of the *Galateo* lies in the analysis of the impact of bad manners on the sensory imagination of others. Particularly important is the mediation of the familiar Aristotelian theory of perception: imagination has become so sensitive that it can be triggered in representing unpleasant olfactory, tactile or gustatory sensations. Poor manners stimulate the production of disagreeable sensory images likely, at least temporarily, to spoil the idyllic universe of the princely banquet.

Late medieval and Renaissance education did not only rely on such an ability to imagine sensation; it developed it, making religious



and secular audiences specialists at imagining and responding to their own sensory imaginings. This configuration initiated a long and intense process of sensitization of the visual field and a fall in the threshold of the visually bearable. This amounted to expelling images deemed unpleasant from representation. We have seen how this applied in religion to images of the Passion and in the secular world to images of plague-stricken bodies. We can identify similar patterns in the banqueting space, an environment of polyphonic sensations where disruptions of the imagination have become social offences.

## Conclusion



Visibly, sensation in representation generates space and meaning. Nevertheless, the rise of naturalism and sensuousness that characterizes the history of Italian painting from Giotto to Caravaggio does not mean in any way that images came closer to reality. Quite the opposite seems to have occurred. As Renaissance art became increasingly similar to the optical image we think we perceive of the world, it became also remarkably skilled at making impossible anatomical positions credible and increasingly selective about what to show and what to conceal. For this purpose it developed sets of signs suggestive of various meaningful sensory ranges.

The sensory world of Renaissance art would then be a highly contrived and visually censored universe where objects, gestures and signs serve as clues to kindle imagination and express what cannot always be shown. We have seen the various ways in which late medieval and Renaissance religious education has promoted and developed the ability to imagine multiple sensations through images. We have seen this at work in meditation, mnemonics, emblems, art theory, iconoclasm, altarpieces, female nudes, tuners and banquets. This culture of the mind so finely articulated in Della Casa's cognitive interpretation of poor social sensory behaviour has neurological foundations. We now know that seeing or imagining particular sensations activates the same neuronal network that would respond to the real stimulus. Suffice here to quote from the *Wikipedia* article on empathy:

Research in recent years has focused on possible brain processes underlying the experience of empathy. For instance, functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) has been employed to investigate the functional anatomy of empathy. These studies have shown that observing another person's emotional state activates parts of the neuronal network involved in processing that same state in oneself, whether it is disgust, touch, or pain.

Thus representations of sensory experience do stimulate the same region of the brain reacting when the real sensation occurs. Renaissance audiences had far less sophisticated categories. They nevertheless inherited and developed a medieval approach to images that relied on this specific ability of the brain to react to sensations in representation or in imagination. If anything, I hope this book has pointed out that triggering the imagination of sensation is central to the fabric of Renaissance art.

Space is another issue in which neuroscience can be helpful, as it envisages two broad types of space particularly relevant to representation: allocentric and egocentric. Egocentric space depends on the position of the viewer and is comparable in this respect to perspective. Allocentric space is the space that the brain defines by assessing relationships between several objects. If we begin to envisage Renaissance art from the angle of sensory spaces – suggestions of volume, relief and air prompted by representation of tactile, olfactory or sonic images – then we begin thinking of space in terms of the relationship between figures and objects, through the network of sensory perceptions linking or distancing them from one another. Such a multi-sensory chain is for instance particularly visible in the attendants of Nativity scenes who connect to warm soapy bath water with one hand and to the damp animate body of a newborn child with the other. Similar phenomena occur with images suggesting divisions of space into zones of sounds, fragrance or stench. While this point may suggest fruitful directions of investigation, the uses of neuroscience should not overshadow the fact that Renaissance artistic sensory imagery is rooted in the categories of its own time.

Sensory prompts have in common with allegories that they feature at the bottom of images, sometimes establishing eye contact, particularly in frescoes and altarpieces where they stand at the viewer's eye level. Far from being marginal, these figures of looping sensation are intermediaries between the sensory world of the picture and that of the viewer. They play the role that Leon Battista Alberti had assigned to a figure placed on the border of narrative compositions indicating to us what is happening in the image.<sup>1</sup> Sensory prompts occupy this role. Thus from the angle of Renaissance philosophy of the mind these prompts and devices – tuning angels, throws of roses or steaming baths – play a role similar to that of the common sense, by grouping multiple sensations into images before imagination sets them into a narrative. Sensory prompts initiate the process of transformation of sensations, real or imagined, into meaningful images.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly the central Renaissance conception of synthetic imitation echoes this early modern system of thought. The practice of combining various styles to acquire one's own pervades Renaissance artistic education and refers to what was understood as a biological rather than a cultural phenomena: bees selectively collecting pollen to produce honey.<sup>3</sup> This topos, usually invoked as the natural model of synthetic imitation, also reflects the assumed functioning of the Aristotelian mind forming images from representations of multiple sensations. By the 1530s the doctrine of synthetic imitation was common enough for the great mnemonic artist Giulio Camillo to write that since works of art now surpass those of nature, artists should imitate art rather than Nature.<sup>4</sup> Regardless of the implied artificiality, if not Mannerism, of such a theory it was applied and carried out as the imitation of a natural process characteristic of assumed ideas about perception and image-based thinking.

One of the central points of interest in studying the senses in images is that sensations evoked by visual signs convey thoughts and perceptions which sometimes escape the net of language or were simply inadequate for verbalization. If anything, Renaissance artistic visual culture tends to suggest rather than show violence and ugliness – not because art has become more intellectual, but

## CONCLUSION

because the visual field has become more *sensitive*. As a result Renaissance art often stands out as an unreliable optical witness of its time but as an eloquent informer of the history of mentalities, of perceptions and of mental imagery.





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### Introduction

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- 7 S. A. Harvey, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination* (London, 2006); C. M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven, CT, 2006); A. Corbin, *Le Miasme et la Jonquille: l'Odorat et l'Imaginaire social XVIII<sup>e</sup>–XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècles* (Paris, 1982).
- 8 See in particular M. Ajmar-Wollheim and F. Dennis, eds, *At Home in Renaissance Italy* (London, 2006).
- 9 S. Ferino-Pagden, *Immagini del Sentire. I cinque Sensi nell'Arte*, exh. cat., Centro culturale 'Città di Cremona' (Venice, 1996), pp. 86–9.
- 10 See D. Cooper and M. Leino, eds, *Depth of Field: Relief Sculpture in Renaissance Italy* (Berne and Oxford, 2007).
- 11 J. Shearman, *Only Connect . . . : Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ, 1992).
- 12 M. Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orator* (Oxford, 1971); *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy . . .* (Oxford, 1972); D. Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art* (Princeton, NJ, 1981); *The Judgment of Sense: Renaissance*

- Naturalism and the Rise of Aesthetics* (Cambridge, 1987); C. Goldstein, *Teaching Art: Academies and Schools from Vasari to Albers* (Cambridge 1996); R. Williams, *Art Theory and Culture in Sixteenth-Century Italy: From Techne to Metatechne* (Cambridge, 1997).
- 13 Bibliography and overview in L. Formigari, ed., *Imago in Phantasia depicta: Studi sulla Teoria dell'Immaginazione* (Rome 1999). See Chapter 1 below for more.

## I The Scientific and Artistic Traditions

- 1 See D. Summers, *The Judgment of Sense: Renaissance Naturalism and the Rise of Aesthetics* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 311.
- 2 Aristotle, *De partibus animalium*, 652b, 21–25.
- 3 R. B. Onians, *The Origins of European Thought about the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time, and Fate* (Cambridge, 1951).
- 4 Galen, *De usu partium corporis humani* (Ithaca, NY, 1968), p. 415.
- 5 On Augustine's philosophy of the mind see Gerard J. P. O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (London, 1987), pp. 15, 81.
- 6 For an overview of the diffusion of Aristotle see B. G. Dod, 'Aristoteles Latinus', in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy: From the Rediscovery of Aristotle to the Disintegration of Scholasticism, 1100–1600* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 46–71. Banned in 1210 in Paris, the Aristotelian corpus eventually entered university teaching after 1255 (*ibid.*, pp. 71–3, 87).
- 7 *Ibid.*, pp. 96–8; a more detailed account in F. E. Cranz, 'The Renaissance Reading of the *De Anima*', in *Platon et Aristote à la Renaissance: xvie Colloque international de Tours* (Paris, 1976), pp. 359–76.
- 8 C. B. Schmitt, *Aristotle and the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 10–33.
- 9 For Aristotle there were three souls: the vegetative, the sensitive and the rational. The first handles nutrition and is common to animal, humans and plants; the second is common to animals and humans and the third is specific to humans.
- 10 Aristotle, *De anima*, 418a.
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 See, for example, Aristotle, *De anima* (Frankfurt, 1491), fol. Z iij.
- 13 Overview of the visual tradition in E. Clarke, *An Illustrated History of Brain Function* (Oxford, 1972). On the basic medieval conception of the faculties of the soul, or internal senses see N. H. Steneck, 'Albert the Great on the Classification and Localization of the Internal Senses', *Isis*, LXV/2 (1974), pp. 193–211. See also M. A. Smith, 'Picturing the Mind: The Representation of Thought in the Middle Ages and Renaissance', *Philosophical Topics*, xx (1992), pp. 149–70.

- 14 A. Benedetti, *Historia corporis humani sive anatomice* (Basle, 1543), ed. G. Ferrari (Florence, 1998), IV, 10, p. 251.
- 15 Aquinas, *In III sententiarum* 9, q. 1, a. 2, q. 2: 'Fuit autem triplex ratio institutionis imaginum in Ecclesia. Primo ad instructionem rudium, qui eis quasi quibusdam libris edocentur. Secundo ut incarnationis mysterium et sanctorum exempla magis in memoria essent, dum quotidie oculis repraesentantur. Tertio ad excitandum devotionis affectum qui ex visi efficacius incitatur quam ex auditis.' Quoted by J. Wirth in 'Structure et Fonction de l'Image chez Saint Thomas d'Aquin', in *Fonction et Usages des Images dans l'Occident médiéval*, ed. J. Baschet and J.-C. Schmitt (Paris, 1996), pp. 39–57, p. 51.
- 16 P. Pino, *Dialogo di Pittura* (Venice, 1548), in *Trattati d'Arte del Cinquecento*, ed. P. Barocchi (Bari, 1960), I, p. 107.
- 17 See M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford, 1972), p. 45.
- 18 On the complex matter of the rise of the artistic profession see M. Warnke, *The Court Artist: On the Ancestry of the Modern Artist* (Cambridge, 1993).
- 19 See *Les Conférences de l'Académie royale de Peinture et de Sculpture au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1996), pp. 50–51.
- 20 See E. Panofsky, *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory* (New York, 1968).

## 2 Imprese – Mnemonics – Meditation

- 1 P. Giovio, *Dialogo dell'Imprese militari e amorose* (Lyons, 1574; 1st edn Florence, 1555), p. 8: 'lequali I gran Signori e nobilissimi Cavalieri a' nostri tempi sogliono portare nelle sopraveste, barde e bandiere, per significare parte de'lor generosi pensieri'. For a survey which omits the question of hat jewels see D. Caldwell, *The Sixteenth-Century Italian Impresa in Theory and Practice* (New York, 2004).
- 2 These are some of the rules set by P. Giovio, *Dialogo dell'Imprese*, p. 12.
- 3 E. Cropper, *Pontormo: Portrait of a Halberdier* (Los Angeles, 1997), pp. 68–75.
- 4 V. Ferro, *Theatro d'Imprese* (Venice, 1623), p. 4.
- 5 Y. Hackenbroch, *Enseignes: Renaissance Hat Jewels* (Florence, 1996), especially pp. 90–190 for Italy. On plaquettes worn as hat jewels see M. Leino, 'Italian Renaissance Plaquettes in Context', PhD diss., University of London, 2003, pp. 127–36.
- 6 See K. Porteman, *Emblematic Exhibitions (Affixiones) at the Brussels Jesuit College (1630–1685): A Study of the Commemorative Manuscripts* (Royal Library, Brussels) (Brussels, 1996). See also J. Manning and M. van Vaeck, eds, *The Jesuits*

and the Emblem Tradition: Selected Papers of the Leuven International Emblem Conference (Turnhout, 1999).

- 7 See Chapter 10 below.
- 8 Rolo, *overo cento Imprese de gl'illustri Sigri. huomini d'arme sanesi, militanti sotto'l Reale, e felicissimo Stendardo del Serenissimo Ferdinando de' Medici* . . . (Bologna, 1591), p. 5: 'si veggono le vive imagini de gli animi verso il Principe'.
- 9 R. Klein, 'La Théorie de l'expression figurée dans les traités italiens sur les imprese, 1555–1612', in *La Forme et l'Intelligible* (Paris, 1970), pp. 124–50.
- 10 G. Ruscelli, *Le Imprese illustri* (Venice, 1566); P. Giovio, *Le sententiose Imprese di monsignor Paolo Giovio et del signor Gabriel Symeoni, ridotte in Rima per il detto Symeoni* (Lyons, 1562); C. Camilli, *Imprese illustri di diuersi* . . . (Venice, 1586); G. C. Cappacio, *Delle imprese* . . . (Naples, 1592).
- 11 See Klein, 'Théorie de l'Expression'. On academic imprese see R. P. Ciardi, 'A Knot of Words and Things: Some Clues for Interpreting the Imprese of Academies and Academicians', in D. S. Chambers and F. Quiviger, eds, *Italian Academies of the Sixteenth Century* (London, 1995), pp. 37–60.
- 12 Klein, 'La Théorie de l'Expression', p. 150.
- 13 G. C. Capaccio, *Delle Imprese* (Naples, 1592), 1, fol. 23r: 'un ritratto del concetto, che col penello dell'imaginativa [l'autore] ha lineato in quell'espressione', quoted by Klein in 'La Théorie de l'Expression', p. 137.
- 14 See Hackenbroch, *Enseignes*, p. 184, and Giovio, *Dialogo*, pp. 53–4.
- 15 For the genealogy of this theme see W. Deonna, 'The Crab and the Butterfly', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, xviii (1956), pp. 47–86.
- 16 Giovio, *Dialogo*, p. 26.
- 17 *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 106.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 36.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 27.
- 21 See also *ibid.*, pp. 96, 97, 112, 120, 129.
- 22 *Ibid.*, pp. 61, 102.
- 23 See Chapter 4 below.
- 24 Giovio, *Sententiose Imprese*, p. 89.
- 25 Ruscelli, *Imprese illustri*, pp. 466, 472.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 115.
- 27 S. W. Pyhrr, *Heroic Armor of the Italian Renaissance: Filippo Negroli and his Contemporaries* (New York, 1998), pp. 186–8.
- 28 F. A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London, 1966); P. Rossi, *Clavis universalis: Arti mnemoniche e logica combinatoria da Lullo a Leibniz* (Milan, 1960).

- 29 *Rhetorica ad herennium*, tr. H. Caplan (London, 1954), III, XVI–XXIV. See also Cicero, *De oratore*, II, lxxxvi, 351–4; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, XI, ii, 17–22.
- 30 *Ad herennium*, III, xvi.
- 31 L. Dolce, *Dialogo di M. Lodovico Dolce, nel quale si ragiona del Modo di accrescere e conseruar la Memoria* . . . (Venice, 1562), fol 27r. (a translation of J. Romberch, *Congestorium artificiosae Memoriae*, 1520).
- 32 *Rhetorica ad herennium*, III, xx, 33. The ram testicles (*testiculi*) stand for the witnesses (*testes*).
- 33 *Ibid.*, III, xxii, 37.
- 34 See Yates, *Art of Memory*. For the medieval period see M. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1990) and *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge, 1998); L. Bolzoni, *La Stanza della Memoria: modelli Letterari e Iconografici dell'età della Stampa* (Turin, 1995).
- 35 Example from *Ars Memorandi* (Pforzheim, 1502). On mnemonic Bibles see J. M. Massing, 'From Manuscript to Engravings: Late Medieval Mnemonic Bibles', in J. J. Berns, ed., *Ars memorativa. Zur kulturgeschichtlichen Bedeutung der Gedächtniskunst 1400–1750* (Tübingen, 1993), pp. 101–15.
- 36 On the critics of mnemonic Bibles see Rossi, *Clavis*, p. 3.
- 37 On the *Arma Christi* see M. Rossi, 'Gedächtnis und Andacht: über die Mnemotechnik biblischer Texte im 15. Jahrhundert', in A. Assmann, ed., *Mnemosyne: Formen und Funktionen der kulturellen Erinnerung* (Frankfurt, 1993), pp. 186–93. On the relationship with the art of memory see P. Parshall, 'The Art of Memory and the Passion', *Art Bulletin*, lxxxi/3 (1999), pp. 456–72, p. 464.
- 38 *Rhetorica ad herennium*, III, xviii, 31.
- 39 See A. Duval, 'Rosaire', in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité ascétique et mystique* (Paris, 1937–), XIII, pp. 939–79; A. Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose: The Making of the Rosary in the Middle Ages* (University Park, PA, 1997); R. J. M. Olson, 'The Rosary and its Iconography', *Arte Cristiana*, LXXXVI (1998), pp. 263–76.
- 40 Duval, *Rosaire*, p. 942.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 949.
- 42 L. Conigliello, ed., *Jacopo Ligozzi [1547–1627]. Le Vedute del Sacro Monte della Verna, I dipinti di Poppi e Bibbiena* (Poppi, 1992), p. 37.
- 43 On scattered flowers see Chapter 8 below.
- 44 On pomanders see R. Falkenburgh, 'Toys for the Soul: Prayer-Nuts and Pomanders in Late Medieval Devotion', in *A Sense of Heaven: 16th-century Boxwood Carvings for Private Devotion* (Leeds, 1999), pp. 32–47.

- 45 Ibid. p. 36.
- 46 I. Cortese, *I Secreti della Signora Isabella Cortese* (Venice, 1603), p. 170: 'E sappi che con la detta pasta potrai fare delle corone bellissime, quali se á in tutta perfettione, facendole in bella stampa, e forma che vorrai.' See also pp. 112: *Pasta per fare pater nostri odoriferi*; p. 168 for *a modo miglior per far pater nostri*, and p. 170 for prayer beads with clove (*Pater nostri de garofali*).
- 47 A. Castello, *Rosario della gloriosa Vergine Maria* (Venice, 1541; 1st edn 1521), fol. 40r: 'la suavita del odore cioè Maria Vergine la quale per le eccellentissime virtu e gratie fu odorifera al eterno Dio e a gli angeli e a gli huomini'.
- 48 'Exerce autem teipsum ad pietatem', Second Epistle to Timothy, 4:7–8. Castello, *Rosario*, fol. Aiiij, presents his book as: 'libro del Rosario: intitolato Essercitio spirituale de gli boni Christiani'.
- 49 See P. Debongnie and S. Schmerber, 'Exercises spirituels', in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité ascétique et mystique* (Paris, 1937–), IV, pp. 1902–49.
- 50 A. J. Schutte, *Printed Italian Vernacular Religious Books 1465–1550: A Finding List* (Geneva, 1983), pp. 100–4; for a full list of the editions of the *Meditaciones* see M. Jordan Stallings, *Meditaciones de Passione Christi olim sancto Bonaventura attributae* (Washington, DC, 1965), pp. 3ff.
- 51 According to Gabriela Zarri a third of the religious books published between 1520 and 1550 are anterior to this period. See her 'Note su diffusione e circolazione di testi devoti (1520–1550)', in *Libri, Idee e Sentimenti religiosi nel Cinquecento italiano*, ed. R. Bussi (Modena, 1987), pp. 133–4.
- 52 The history and diffusion of the *Spiritual Exercises* has been monitored by Ignatio Iparraguirre, *Práctica de los Ejercicios espirituales de san Ignacio de Loyola*, 3 vols (Bilbao and Rome, 1948–73).
- 53 See Pseudo-Bonaventure, *Meditations on the Life of Christ: An Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century*, ed. I. Ragusa (Princeton, NJ, 1961), pp. 38–9. Latin text in Iohannis de Caulibus, *Meditaciones Vita Christi* (Turnhout, 1997).
- 54 *The Golden Legend or Lives of the Saints*, trans. William Caxton (London, 1900), LII, p. 68. The theme pervades meditation handbooks and accounts of meditative experiences. See, e.g., Iohannis de Caulibus, *Meditaciones*, viiii, 25ff, on the circumcision: 'Ploravit ergo puer Iesus hodie propter dolorem quem sensit in carne sua; nam ceram carnem et passibilem habuit, sicut ceteris hominibus.' See also Angela da Foligno, *Libro utile e devoto* . . . (Genoa, 1536), fol. xlix: 'Fu anchora quell dolore più intenso per la nobilita, e delicatezza d'esso corpo virgineo qual fu più nobile d'ogni altro corpo . . . e pero più sentiva e più era afflito del predetto dolore.'



- 55 This aspect is discussed in F. P. Pickering, *Literature and Art in the Middle Ages* (London, 1970), pp. 241–56 and J. Marrow, *Passion Iconography in Northern European Art of the Later Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance* (Kortrijk, 1979).
- 56 Castello, *Rosario*, fols 112r, 116r: ‘gli puoseno in nel suo santissimo capo una corona de spine la quale haveva le spine longissime e dure come de ferro’. Ibid., fol. 115r: ‘anchora fu si fattamente quella depressa e infissa nel suo capo che pervenire le spine fina al cervello’. There is no nerve in the brain. Such punctures would have been painless although likely to cause serious neurological malfunctions.
- 57 Ibid., 136r, and *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, LXXVIII, p. 333.

### 3 The Human Figure in Renaissance Art

- 1 A. Allori, *Ragionamenti delle Regole del Disegno*, in *Scritti d'Arte del Cinquecento*, ed. P. Barocchi (Milan and Naples, 1973), II, pp. 1941–81. See also B. Cellini, *Discorso sopra l'Arte del Disegno*, in *Opere*, ed. B. Maier (Milan, 1968), pp. 847–51.
- 2 See Chapter 5 below.
- 3 L. B. Alberti, *Della Pittura*, II, 36, in *Opere volgari*, ed. C. Grayson (Bari, 1973), p. 62.
- 4 See for example Leonardo da Vinci, *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, ed. J. P. Richter (Oxford, 1939), p. 489; P. Pino, *Dialogo di Pittura* (Venice, 1548), in *Trattati d'Arte del Cinquecento*, ed. P. Barocchi (Bari, 1960), I, p. 128; B. Cellini, *Sopra i Principi e'l Modo d'imparare l'Arte del Disegno*, pp. 871–7; V. Danti, *Trattato delle perfette Proporzioni* (Florence, 1564), in *Trattati d'Arte*, I, pp. 211–12; G. B. Armenini, *De' i veri Precetti della Pittura* (Ravenna, 1586), ed. M. Gorreri (Turin, 1988), p. 68; G. P. Lomazzo, *Trattato dell'Arte della Pittura*, in *Scritti sulle Arti*, ed. R. P. Ciardi (Florence, 1973), I, p. 276.
- 5 G. Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti Pittori, Scultori e Architettori nelle Redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, ed. R. Bettarini and P. Barocchi (Florence, 1976), I, p. 115.
- 6 P. Pino, *Dialogo*, p. 115.
- 7 Vasari, *Le Vite*, IV, p. 46. For an overview of the debate see C. Farago, *Leonardo da Vinci's Paragone: A Critical Interpretation with a New Edition of the Text in the Codex Urbino* (Leiden, 1991).
- 8 A. Condivi, *Vita di Michelagnolo Buonarroti*, ed. E. Spina Barelli (Milan, 1964), p. 66.
- 9 See Chapter I above.
- 10 In A. Bronzino, *Rime in Burla*, ed. F. Petrucci Nardelli (Rome, 1988), p. 23: ‘Io vidi a questi giorni un buon ritratto d'un uomo e d'una donna: erano ignudi dipinti insieme in un piacevol atto.’

Ibid.: 'Chi si ritrae sul letto o faticose attitudine fa, ritto o a sedere; chi tien qualcosa in mano, chi l'ha nascose; chi si vuol dietro ad un altro vedere; chi vuol essere dipinto innanzi ad uno; chi s'attien; chi fa vista di cadere. Io non saprei contarne de'mille uno de'diversi atti e modi stravaganti; sapete che il variar piace ad ognuno. Basta che a fargli o di dietro o davanti, a traverso, in iscorcio o in prospettiva s'adopera il pennello a tutti quanti.'

- 11 D. Parker, 'Towards a Reading of Bronzino's Burlesque Poetry', *Renaissance Quarterly*, I (1997), pp. 1011–55, p. 1007. On *I Modi* see B. Talvacchia, *Taking Positions: On the Erotic in Renaissance Culture* (Princeton, NJ, 1999).
- 12 See S. Michalski, 'L'Expansion initiale de l'Iconoclisme protestant 1521–1537', in *Iconoclisme: Vie et Mort de l'Image médiévale*, exh. cat., Musée d'histoire de Berne, Musée de l'œuvre Notre-Dame, Musées de Strasbourg (Paris, 2001), pp. 46–51 and O. Christin, 'France et Pays-Bas, le second Iconoclisme', in *Iconoclisme*, pp. 57–66. On French iconoclasm see O. Christin, *Une Révolution symbolique: L'Iconoclisme huguenot et la Reconstruction catholique* (Paris, 1991). For England see M. Aston, 'Iconoclasm in England', in *Iconoclasm vs. Art and Drama* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1989), pp. 47–90.
- 13 S. Caponetto, *La Riforma protestante nell'Italia del Cinquecento* (Turin, 1992), pp. 365–9.
- 14 Christin, *Une Révolution symbolique*, pp. 78–9.
- 15 A summary of Luther's attitude towards images is in S. Michalski, *The Reformation and the Visual Arts* (London, 1993), pp. 1–42.
- 16 G. Scavizzi, *The Controversy on Images from Calvin to Baronius* (New York, 1992), p. 31.
- 17 In *A Reformation Debate: Karlstadt, Emser and Eck on Sacred Images. Three Treatises in Translation*, ed. Bryan D. Mangrum and Giuseppe Scavizzi (Ottawa, 1991), p. 36.
- 18 *Iconoclisme*, pp. 341–2.
- 19 On the various rituals of destruction see Michalski, *Reformation and the Visual Arts*, pp. 75–98.
- 20 Enough remains to constitute the section of an exhibition, see *Iconoclisme*, pp. 316–45.
- 21 On mnemonic Bibles see Chapter 2 above. On the broader theme of the Reformation of inner images see Michalski, *Reformation and the Visual Arts*, pp. 182–4.
- 22 See Caponetto, *La Riforma protestante*, pp. 21–8.
- 23 Survey in Scavizzi, *Controversy on Images*.

- 24 F. Pacheco, *Arte de la Pintura* (Madrid, 1649); Molanus, *De picturis et imaginibus sacris* (Leuven, 1570).
- 25 See in particular Scavizzi, *Controversy on Images*, pp. 30–31.
- 26 Alberti, *Della Pittura*, II, 44, p. 76.
- 27 G. A. Gilio, *Dialogo degli Errori e degli Abusi de' Pittori circa l'Istorie* (Camerino, 1564), pp. 3–4: 'I moderni pittori, quando a fare hanno qualche opera, il primo loro intento è di torcere a le loro figure il capo, le braccia o le gambe, acciò si dica che sono sforzate, e quei sforzi a le volte sonotali che meglio sarebbe che non fussero, et al soggetto de l'istoria poco o nulla attendono.' See also Ambrogio Catarino, *De cultu et adoratione imaginum* (Rome, 1552), p. 144: 'Alias autem econtrariò tanta arte compositas, ut quibusdam importunis gestibus interim personarum decorem non servant, nihil gravitatis habentes, nihil devotionis excitantes.'
- 28 Gilio, *Dialogo degli Errori*, p. 88: 'Molte volte ho di questo ragionato con pittori; I quali tutti per una bocca m'hanno rispotto, nol comporta la pittura, sarebbe contro il decoro dell' arte.'
- 29 Ibid., p. 87.
- 30 F. de Sales, *Introduction à la Vie dévôte* (London, 1943), pp. 18–20, 71, 142.

#### 4 Ornament

- 1 See, in particular, A. F. Doni, *Disegno* (Venice, 1549), fol. 21v, where *grottesche* are associated with the imagery of the imagination.
- 2 On the rediscovery of the *grottesche* see N. Dacos, *La Découverte de la Domus Aurea et la Formation des Grottesques à la Renaissance* (London, 1969), pp. 57ff, and C. La Malfa, *Pintoricchio a Roma* (Milan, 2009), pp. 61–73.
- 3 Vitruvius, *De architectura*, VII, 5, the theme is carried forward in the main Renaissance commentaries.
- 4 Vitruvius, *De architectura*, di Lucio Vitruvio Pollione *De architectura libri dece traducti de latino in vulgare affigurati, comentati* (Comé, 1521), VII, 5, p. 188: 'Certo si come la Fantasia nel sogno ci rappresenta confusamente le imagini delle cose, e spesso pone insieme nature diuerse, così potemo dire, che facciano le Grottesche, lequali senza dubbio potemo nominare sogni della pittura.'
- 5 See Doni, *Disegno*, fol. 22rv; the theme of projecting images on irregular and maculated surfaces is well known through a passage of Leonardo, recommending this practice to painters. See also G. B. Armenini, *De' veri Precetti della Pittura* (Ravenna, 1586), p. 194.
- 6 See examples in L. C. Randall, *Images in the Margins of Gothic Manuscripts* (Berkeley, CA, 1966), plates cxii–cxiii.
- 7 L. Spirito, *Le Passetemps de la Fortune des Dez: ingénieusement compilé par maistre*

- Laurens l'Esprit (Paris 1559), p. Diiij.
- 8 See Chapter 9 below.
  - 9 Reproduction and further references in B. E. Holman, ed., *Disegno: Italian Renaissance Designs for the Decorative Arts* (Dubuque, IA, 1997), pp. 24–6.
  - 10 In E. Miller, *16th-century Italian Ornament Prints in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London, 1999), pp. 88–93.
  - 11 See Chapter 5 below.
  - 12 See Chapter 7 below.
  - 13 On Bandinelli's interpretation see Jean-Pierre Cuzin, Jean-René Gaborit and Alain Pasquier, eds, *D'après l'Antique*, exh. cat., Musée du Louvre (Paris, 2001), pp. 237–40.
  - 14 From G. Ruscelli, *Le Imprese illustri* (Venice, 1566).
  - 15 Ibid.
  - 16 C. L. Guest, 'Iconography and Topography in the Grottesche of Raphael', *Accademia Raffaello, Atti e studi*, 11 (2006), pp. 75–80, p. 79; A. Chastel, *La Grottesque* (Paris, 1988); P. Morel, *Les Grottesques: les Figures de l'Imaginaire dans la Peinture italienne de la Fin de la Renaissance* (Paris, 1997), pp. 87ff.
  - 17 On Ficino see Chapter 6 below.
  - 18 G. P. Lomazzo, *Trattato dell'Arte della Pittura, Scultura et Architettura*, in *Scritti sulle Arti*, 11, ed. R. P. Ciardi (Florence, 1974), p. 369: 'veniuano fatte non altrimenti che enimmi, ò cifere, ò figure egittie, dimandate ieroglifici, per significare alcun concetto o pensiero sotto altre figure, come noi usiamo negli emblemi & nelle imprese. Et per me credo che cio fosse perche non ci è via più accommodata per disegnare ouer mostrar qual concetto si voglia della grottesca'.
  - 19 See Chapter 2 above.
  - 20 Ruscelli, *Imprese*, p. 353, see also p. 466
  - 21 A. Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose: The Making of the Rosary in the Middle Ages* (University Park, PA, 1997), p. 101.
  - 22 Ruscelli, *Imprese*, p. 29: 'Ove parimente doveranno prender non picciola diletatione, & ancora utilità, tutti coloro, che si diletano del disegno, & della pittura, avendo qui tanta copia d'ornamenti, tutti varij, & tutti bellissimi, come quei che più se n'intendono, più conosceranno, & averanno in pregio.'
  - 23 See Chapter 2 above.
  - 24 See C. Ginzburg, *Il Nicodemismo: Simulazione e Dissimulazione religiosa nell'Europa del '500* (Turin, 1970).
  - 25 E. Panofsky and F. Saxl, 'Classical Mythology in Mediaeval Art', *Metropolitan Museum Studies*, IV/2 (1932–3), pp. 228–80, pp. 264–6.
  - 26 See, for example, M. Baxandall, 'Jacopo Sadoletto's *Laocoön*', in *Words for*

*Pictures: Seven Papers on Renaissance Art and Criticism* (New Haven, CT, and London, 2003), pp. 98–116 (pp. 99–101).

### 5 Allegories

- 1 C. Nordenfalk, 'Les cinq Sens dans l'Art du Moyen Age', *La Revue de l'Art*, XXXIV (1976), pp. 17–28, p. 21.
- 2 Ibid., p. 22. See also B. Gagnebin, ed., *L'Enluminure de Charlemagne à François Ier: Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque publique et Universitaire de Genève*, exh. cat., Musée Rath (Geneva, 1976), pp. 57–9.
- 3 S. Ferino-Pagden, *Immagini del Sentire. I cinque Sensi nell'Arte*, exh. cat., Centro culturale 'Città di Cremona' (Venice, 1996), pp. 86–9; Nordenfalk, 'Les cinq Sens dans l'Art du Moyen Age', pp. 26–7.
- 4 See, for example, Ferino-Pagden, *Immagini del Sentire*, pp. 132–41.
- 5 Discussed in C. Nordenfalk, 'The Five Senses in Flemish Art before 1600', in *Netherlandish Mannerism. Papers Given at a Symposium in the Nationalmuseum Stockholm*, ed. Görel Cavalli-Bjorkman (Stockholm, 1985), pp. 135–54, pp. 143–5.
- 6 See C. Schuckman and D. de Hoop Scheffer, eds, *Hollstein's Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts 1450–1570*, XLVI, *Marteen de Vos* (Rotterdam, 1995), pp. 188–90, 198–201, 204–5, 212–13.
- 7 See Chapter 9 below.
- 8 H. G. Friedman, *The Symbolic Goldfinch: Its History and Significance in European Devotional Art* (Washington, DC, 1946), pp. 110–13.
- 9 On the iconography of Prudence see *La Représentation de la Prudence: Actes du colloque*, Université de Haute Alsace (Paris, 1999).
- 10 Ferino-Pagden, *Immagini del Sentire*, pp. 122–7, and M. Díaz Padrón and M. Royo-Villanova, *David Teniers, Jan Brueghel y los Gabinetes de Pinturas*, exh. cat., Prado (Madrid, 1992), pp. 112–75.
- 11 Ibid., p. 132.
- 12 Ibid., p. 136.
- 13 Ibid., pp. 150, 154–67.

### 6 Sight

- 1 See Chapter 1 above.
- 2 Aristotle, *On Sense and Sensible Objects*, 437a.
- 3 M. Ficino, *El Libro dell'Amore*, v, 2, 6.
- 4 G. Toffanin, 'Petrarchismo e Trattati d'Amore nel Rinascimento', *Nuova Antologia*, CCLVIII (1928), p. 9.
- 5 On Brocardo see S. Speroni, *I Dialoghi* (Venice, 1542), fol 22r–23v; G. Ruscelli, *Lettura . . . sopra un sonetto dell'illustrissimo marchese della Terza*

- ... (Venice, 1552) fol. 64r ff, provides about 450 names drawn from 34 cities.
- 6 G. Gelli, *Lettonne decima di Giovambattista Gelli* (Florence, 1551); Aristotle, *Physics*, 192a–193b.
  - 7 F. Quiviger, 'Benedetto Varchi and the Visual Arts', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 1 (1997), pp. 219–24.
  - 8 A. Firenzuola, *Dialogo delle Bellezze delle Donne* (Florence, 1548), fol. 73r ff. See E. Cropper, 'On Beautiful Women, Parmigianino, Petrarchismo, and the Vernacular', *Art Bulletin*, LVIII/3 (1976), pp. 374–94 (p. 386).
  - 9 P. Aretino, *Sei Giornate*, ed. G. Aquilecchia (Bari, 1975), pp. 112, 154, 208.
  - 10 See *Art Theorists of the Italian Renaissance*, CD-Rom (Cambridge, 1998); searching the word *gratia* produces 2,941 matches and the word *grazia* 1,370.
  - 11 R. S. Nelson, ed., *Visuality before and beyond the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 2000). For a recent reassessment see the introduction of P. Dubourg-Glatigny, ed., *L'Artiste et l'Œuvre à l'Épreuve de la Perspective = L'Artista, l'Opera e la Sfida della Prospettiva* (Rome, 2006).
  - 12 L. B. Alberti, *Della Pittura*, I, 12, in *Opere volgari*, ed. C. Grayson (Bari, 1973), p. 28.
  - 13 A. Condivi, *Vita di Michelagnolo Buonarroti*, ed. E. Spina (Milan, 1964), p. 68.
  - 14 As observed in 1558 by Lodovico Dolce, *Dialogo della Pittura*, in *Trattati d'Arte del Cinquecento*, ed. P. Barocchi (Bari, 1960), I, p. 190.

## 7 Touch

- 1 Aristotle, *De Anima*, 418a.
- 2 See E. Harvey's introduction to *Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture* (Philadelphia, 2002), pp. 1–15; C. Benthien, *Flesh* (New York, 2002), and M. O'Rourke Boyle, *Senses of Touch: Human Dignity and Deformity from Michelangelo to Calvin* (Leiden, 1998).
- 3 R. F. Schmidt and H. Altner, *Fundamentals of Sensory Physiology* (Berlin and New York, 1986), p. 29.
- 4 See Aldobrandino da Siena, *Trattato dei cinque Sensi dell'Uomo con altre Scritture del buon Secolo della Lingua* (Florence, 1872), pp. 4–5, p. 6: 'Nelle mani e in tutti gli altri membri è disposto il toccare'. For later renditions of the same theme see, for example, G. Reisch, *Margarita philosophica*, trans. G. P. Gallucci (Venice, 1600), p. 612 (first Latin edn Freiburg, 1503). Aristotle speaks of the flesh as the intermediary, rather than the organ, of this sense, without however clarifying its nature (*De anima*, 423b 25).
- 5 V. S. Ramachandran, 'Synaesthesia in Phantom Limbs Induced with



- Mirrors', *Proceedings: Biological Science*, CCLVI/1369 (1996), pp. 377–86.
- 6 On dancing see S. Fermor, *Studies in the Depiction of the Moving Figure in Italian Renaissance Art, Art Criticism and Dance Theory*, PhD diss., University of London, 1990, pp. 69–76.
  - 7 J.C. Schmitt, *La Raison des Gestes* (Paris, 1990), pp. 309–13.
  - 8 *Ibid.*, pp. 316–20.
  - 9 G. Pozzi, ed., *Scrittrici mistiche italiane* (Genoa, 1988), p. 195: 'richiamando innanzitutto alla memoria la passione di Pietro, ebbe un improvviso rapimento e il suo corpo rimase immobile nello stesso modo in cui l'apostolo fu sospeso in croce. Poi, meditata la passione di Paolo e rapita come prima nell'estasi, il suo corpo apparve come quello di uno che si dispone per essere decapitato, inchinato e con il collo proteso.' The same empathy occurs at Easter from Good Friday, with the Passion.
  - 10 *Ibid.*, p. 289: 'Signore non sum digna de patir questa sanctissima passione . . . E dicto questo è ligata cum le mani susa el pecto cum ligami invisibili et immobili, come è decto de sopra, in quello modo che stava Christo ligato devante a Pilato.'
  - 11 See Chapter 2 above.
  - 12 E. H. Gombrich, 'The Style All'Antica: Imitation and Assimilation', in *Norm and Form. Studies in the Art of the Renaissance* (London, 1966), p. 126.
  - 13 See Chapter 3 above.
  - 14 F. Zöllner, 'Ogni pittore dipinge sè. Leonardo da Vinci and Automimesis', in M. Winner, ed., *Der Künstler über sich in seinem Werk* (Weinheim, 1992), pp. 137–60, approaches the subject exclusively from the angle of physiognomy.
  - 15 Paolo Pino, *Dialogo di Pittura* (Venice, 1548), p. 57.
  - 16 See Chapter 2 above.
  - 17 *Fioretti di Sancto Francesco*, ed. G. L. Passerini (Città di Castello, 1908), p. 156 (chapter XLII): 'Il quale Egli ricevendo divotissimamente e abbracciandolo e baciandolo et istrignendoselo al petto, tutto si struggeva e risolveva in amore divino e inesplicabile.' The scene is inspired by the legend of the high priest Symeon, on which see H. Maguire, 'The Iconography of Symeon with the Christ Child in Byzantine Art', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, xxxiv (1980/81), pp. 261–9.
  - 18 See C. Klapisch-Zuber, 'Holy Dolls: Play and Piety in Florence in the Quattrocento', in S. Blake McHam, ed., *Looking at Italian Renaissance Sculpture* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 111–27, p. 121.
  - 19 See L. Réau, *Iconographie de l'Art chrétien* (Paris, 1955–9), II (1957), pp. 73, 95; for the Byzantine emergence of Mary's motherhood from the ninth century onwards see I. Kalavrezou, 'Images of the Mother: When the

- Virgin Mary Became *Meter Theou*', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XLIV (1990), pp. 165–72.
- 20 See J. Stubblebine, 'Byzantine Influence in Thirteenth-century Italian Panel Painting', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XX (1966), pp. 85–101; on the iconography of the Virgin see V. Lasareff, 'Studies in the Iconography of the Virgin', *Art Bulletin*, XX/I (1938), pp. 26–65.
  - 21 The theme of relief in painting is amply studied. For a concise summary of the main sources see L. Grassi and M. Pepe, *Dizionario della Critica d'Arte* (Turin, 1978), II, pp. 480–81; L. Freedman, 'Rilievo as an Artistic Term in Renaissance Art Theory', *Rinascimento*, XXXIX (1989), pp. 217–47. On Leonardo see John Shearman's seminal article 'Leonardo's Colour and Chiaroscuro', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, XXV (1962), pp. 13–47, subsequently developed by C. Farago, 'Leonardo's Color and Chiaroscuro Reconsidered', *Art Bulletin*, LXXIII/I, (1991), pp. 63–88.
  - 22 On this motif, which appears in Byzantine art from the twelfth century, see R. Corrie, 'Coppo di Marcovaldo's Madonna del Bordone and the Meaning of the Bare-Legged Christ Child in Siena and the East', *Gesta*, XXXV (1996), pp. 43–65, p. 51 and notes.
  - 23 The invention is unlikely to be by Masaccio as suggested by G. Dall'i Regoli, 'Le Mani e Gli affetti: Addenda', in M. Di Giampaolo, E. Saccomani and M. Gregori, eds, *Scritti di Storia dell'Arte in Onore di Sylvie Béguin* (Naples, 2001), pp. 47–52.
  - 24 See Chapter 5 above.
  - 25 See J. Pope Hennessy, *Donatello Sculptor* (New York, 1993), p. 140.
  - 26 See Chapter 5 above.
  - 27 See Chapter 4 above.
  - 28 R. Ciabani, *Torturati, impiccati, squartati: la Pena capitale a Firenze dal 1423 al 1759* (Florence, 1994); M. B. Merback, *The Thief, the Cross and the Wheel. Pain and the Spectacle of Punishment in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (London, 1999), pp. 126–57.
  - 29 On the symptoms of the plague as recorded by contemporary sources see S. Cohn, *The Black Death Transformed: Disease and Culture in Early Renaissance Europe* (London, 2002), pp. 83–95.
  - 30 See L. Marshall, 'Manipulating the Sacred: Image and Plague in Renaissance Italy', *Renaissance Quarterly*, LIII (1994), pp. 485–532, pp. 489–500 on Sebastian and pp. 502–6. Cohn, *Black Death Transformed*, p. 83, quotes testimonies of sufferers comparing the initial eruption of the diseases to being pricked by the point of arrows.
  - 31 C. E. Boeckl, 'Giorgio Vasari's San Rocco Altarpiece: Tradition and Innovation in Plague Iconography', *Artibus et Historiae*, XXII/43 (2001),

- pp. 29–40; P. Berger, 'Mice, Arrows and Tumors: Medieval Plague Iconography North of the Alps', in F. Morando, ed., *Piety and Plague from Byzantium to the Baroque* (Kirkville, MO, 2007), pp. 23–63, and, in the same volume: S. Barker, 'The Making of a Plague Saint: Saint Sebastian's Imagery and Cult before the Counter Reformation', pp. 90–131.
- 32 J. Gagé, *Apollon romain: Essai sur le Culte d'Apollon et le Développement du 'ritus Graecus' à Rome des Origines à Auguste* (Paris, 1955), pp. 286–93.
- 33 F. Morando, 'Response to the Plague in Early Modern Italy: What the Primary Sources, Printed and Painted, Reveal', in G. A. Bailey, ed., *Hope and Healing. Painting in Italy in a Time of Plague 1500–1800* (Chicago, 2005), pp. 9–11, speaks of visual clues.
- 34 See D. Denny, 'Some Symbols in the Arena Chapel Frescoes', *Art Bulletin*, IV/2 (1973), pp. 205–12, p. 205; L. Hass, *The Renaissance Man and his Children. Childhood and Early Childhood in Florence* (New York, 1998), pp. 47–8.
- 35 J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie de l'Enfance de la Vierge dans l'Empire Byzantin et en Occident* (Brussels, 1964), I, pp. 94–5, 97.
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 91.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 91.
- 38 E. Kitzinger, *The Mosaics of St Mary of the Admiral in Palermo* (Washington, DC, 1990), pp. 175–81.
- 39 Galen, *De sanitae tuenda*, VII, x.
- 40 D. Denny, 'Some Symbols in the Arena Chapel Frescoes', p. 205.

## 8 Smell

- 1 J. M. Wolfe, ed., *Sensation and Perception* (Sunderland, MA, 2006), p. 318.
- 2 G. Reisch, *Margarita filosofica* . . . (Venice, 1600), p. 610: 'l'organo del odorato è nel cervello sopra il naso collocato, accio che non possa essere offeso facilmente da' contrari. Questi sono due pezzetti di carne in modo di papille concave e spongose sospese verso l'cervello c'hanno un coperchietto, il quale s'apre e si serra per la inspiratione & respiratione. Questo organo è per natura caldo e senza alcun odore, perche li possa ricevere tutti.'
- 3 L. Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, xxxix, 55.
- 4 See C. Casagrande, 'Sistema dei Sensi e Classificazione dei Peccati (Secoli XII–XIII)', *I cinque Sensi / The Five Senses*, *Micrologus*, x (2002), pp. 175–89.
- 5 C. Classen, *The Color of Angels: Cosmology, Gender and the Aesthetic Imagination*, (London, 1998), pp. 47–50.
- 6 See Homer, *Iliad*, i, 475.
- 7 On the identification of these two figures as Zephyrus and Cloris see A.

- Nova, *Il Libro del Vento: rappresentare l'Invisibile* (Genoa, 2007), pp. 89–90.
- 8 R. E. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. W. R. Trask (London, 1953), pp. 195–200.
  - 9 See for example Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, 125.61; Matteo Bandello, *Novelle*, 3, 12.
  - 10 Song of Solomon, 1:15: 'Ecce tu pulcher es dilecte mi et decorus lectulus noster floridus.' On this theme see K. Lerchner, *Lectulus Floridus: zu Bedeutung des Bettes in Literatur und Handschriftenillustration des Mittelalters* (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, 1993). See for example O. Clemen, ed., *Canticum canticorum: Holztafeldruck von c. 1465* (Zwickau, 1910).
  - 11 B. Cellini, *La Vita* (Milan, 1968), I, 108: 'io rifacevo il mio letto tanto gentilmente e con alcuni fiori, che quasi ogni mattina io mi facevo portare da un certo Savoino.' On perfumes in the Renaissance domestic interior see S. Cavallo, 'Health, Beauty and Hygiene', in M. Ajmar-Wollheim and F. Dennis, eds, *At Home in Renaissance Italy* (London, 2006), pp. 184–6.
  - 12 G. F. Straparola, *Le piacevoli Notti*, *Notte 1, favola 4*: 'Appresso questo, la bella giovane pose sopra il vago letto rose, viole ed altri odoriferi fiori, mescolati insieme con uccelletti cipriani ed altri odori che piacevolmente olivano ed al cerebro molto erano confortativi.' See also Boccaccio, *Filocolo*, 4, 85, for a description of a scented bed and *Decameron* 2, 5 for a scented bedroom: 'nella sua camera se n'entrò, la quale di rose, di fiori d'aranci e d'altri odori tutta oliva.' All quotations from the CD-Rom: *Letteratura Italiana Zanichelli*, ed. P. Stopelli and E. Picchi (Bologna, 1995).
  - 13 G. Barberi Squarotti and G. Vidossi, 'Uccelletti Cipriani', *Giornale storico della Letteratura italiana*, CXXXV (1958), pp. 363–9; G. Barberi Squarotti, 'Ancora sugli "Uccelletti cipriani"', *Giornale storico della Letteratura italiana*, CXL (1963), pp. 308–9. C. Classen, D. Howes and A. Synnott, *Aroma. The Cultural History of Smell* (London and New York, 1994), pp. 62–73 for an overview of domestic perfumes.
  - 14 Isabella Cortese, *I Secreti della Signora Isabella Cortese* (Venice, 1604), p. 222. Further recipes in A. P. Torresi, ed., *Il Ricettario Bardi. Cosmesi e tecnica artistica nella Firenze medicea* (Ferrara, 1994) p. 62.
  - 15 On the *Venus of Urbino* see A. Bayer, 'From Cassone to Poesia: Paintings of Love and Marriage', in A. Bayer, ed., *Art and Love in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven, CT, 2008), pp. 230–32.
  - 16 C. Hope, 'Tiziano e la Committenza', in *Tiziano* (Venice, 1990), p. 81.
  - 17 Bayer, 'From Cassone', p. 232.
  - 18 R. Goffen, 'Sex, Space, and Social History in Titian's *Venus of Urbino*', in R. Goffen, ed., *Titian's Venus of Urbino* (New York, 1997), pp. 63–90.
  - 19 G. Heinz-Mohr, *Die Rose: Entfaltung eines Symbols* (Munich, 1988), p. 63; D. M. Stoddart, *The Scented Ape: The Biology and Culture of Human Odour* (New

- York, 1990).
- 20 L. Contile, *Discorso . . . sopra li cinque Sensi del Corpo nel Commento d'un Sonetto del Signor Giuliano Gosellini, al Cavaliere Leone Scultore Cesareo* (Milan, 1552), fol. 35r: 'è una potenza ordinata nella parte dinante del cervello e con nervi e con mollizij, e con pellicine a ricevere gli odori unitamente disposta, onde al anima passa la soavità delle cose odorifere, massimamente della donna amata, il cui delicato corpo spirando naturali odori, gli spiriti amorosamente infiammati del Amante dolcemente ricrea.' See also Brantôme (c. 1540–1614), *Vie des Dames galantes* (Paris, n.d.), Discours second, p. 173.
- 21 Suetonius, *Neron*, XXXI.
- 22 B. Platina, *Il Piacere onesto e la buona Salute*, ed. E. Faccioli (Turin, 1985), p. 20.
- 23 Cristoforo di Messisbugo, *Libro novo nel qual s'Insegna a far dogni Sorte di Vivande . . .* (Sala Bolognese, 1980), fol. 3v.
- 24 See F. Pacheco, *Arte della Pintura*, ed. B. Bassegoda i Hugas (Madrid, 1990), p. 639.
- 25 See Gauvin Alexander Bailey et al., *Hope and Healing: Painting in Italy in a Time of Plague, 1500–1800* (Worcester, MA, 2005), pp. 9–11.
- 26 Wolfe, *Sensation and Perception*, p. 333.
- 27 Ibid., p. 328.

## 9 Sound

- 1 A. Karlstad, *On the Removal of Images*, in *A Reformation Debate: Karlstadt, Emser and Eck on Sacred Images. Three Treatises in Translation*, ed. G. Scavizzi (Ottawa, 1991), pp. 25–7.
- 2 J. M. Wolfe, ed., *Sensation and Perception* (Sunderland, MA, 2006), pp. 227–30.
- 3 F. Dennis, 'Music', in M. Ajmar-Wollheim and F. Dennis, eds, *At Home in Renaissance Italy* (London, 2006), pp. 227–43.
- 4 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Lat. 82, fol. 42v.
- 5 M. J. H. van Schaik, *The Harp in the Middle Ages: The Symbolism of a Musical Instrument* (Amsterdam, 1992), p. 52–7.
- 6 Ibid., p. 24. See also R. Buckland, 'Sounds of the Psalter: Orality and Musical Symbolism in the Luttrell Psalter', *Music in Art*, XXVIII (2003), pp. 71–97, p. 85.
- 7 Van Schaik, *The Harp in the Middle Ages*, p. 51.
- 8 On the performance of psalms see Buckland, 'Sounds of the Psalter', pp. 73–5.
- 9 Aristotle, *De anima*, 420b.
- 10 T. Hyman, *Sienese Painting: The Art of a City Republic (1278–1477)* (London, 2003), p. 100.
- 11 See G. P. Cerere, 'Gli Strumenti musicali nella Maestà di Massa Marittima',

- L'Unicorno*, v (1994), pp. 16–17; F. Galgani, *Gli strumenti musicali nella Maestà di Ambrogio Lorenzetti a Massa Marittima. Analisi storica e Ricostruzione* (Massa Marittima, 2000); M. Brown, 'Trecento Angels and the Instruments they Play', in *Modern Musical Scholarship*, ed. E. Olleson (Stockfield, 1978), pp. 112–40.
- 12 K. Powers, 'Music-Making Angels in Italian Renaissance Paintings: Symbolism and Reality', *Music in Art*, xxix (2004), pp. 53–61.
  - 13 Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti Pittori, Scultori e Architettori nelle Redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, ed. R. Bettarini and P. Barocchi (Florence, 1976), IV, p. 96. I use De Vere's translation (London, 1913), IV, p. 157.
  - 14 P. Humfrey, *Cima da Conegliano* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 121–2. Although the tuning figure does not have any wings it is consistently referred to as an angel by all sources.
  - 15 *Ibid.*, plates 99, 135, 158, 161, 173.
  - 16 On the iconography of St Peter Martyr see his Wikipedia entry. For the *lira da braccio* in art see K. Powers. 'The Lira da Braccio in the Angel's Hand in Italian Renaissance Madonna Enthroned Paintings', *Music in Art*, xxvi (2001), pp. 21–8.
  - 17 E. Wyss, *The Myth of Apollo and Marsyas in the Art of the Italian Renaissance: An Inquiry into the Meaning of Images* (Newark, DE, 1996), pp. 26–39. The contrast between *lira da braccio* and bagpipe, rather than flute, seems a Renaissance variation.
  - 18 See L. C. Randall, *Images in the Margins of Gothic Manuscripts* (Berkeley, CA, 1966), pl. 143. On this contrast see Buckland, 'Sounds of the Psalter', p. 85.
  - 19 B. Aikema, 'Avampiano e sfondo nell'opera di Cima da Conegliano. La pala d'altare e lo spettatore tra la fine del Quattrocento e l'inizio del Cinquecento', *Venezia Cinquecento*, iv/8 (1994), pp. 93–112 (pp. 99–101).
  - 20 See F. Gerson-Kiwi, 'Drone and Dyaphonia Basilica', *Yearbook of the International Music Council*, iv (1972), pp. 9–22.
  - 21 C. Burnett, 'Sound and its Perception in the Middle Ages', in *The Second Sense: Studies in Hearing and Musical Judgment from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century*, ed. C. Burnett, M. Fend and P. Gouk (London, 1991), pp. 43–69.
  - 22 Wolfe, *Sensation and Perception*, p. 233.

## 10 Banquets

- 1 Aristotle, *On Sense and Sensible Objects*, 442a.
- 2 For an attempt to compare Renaissance banquetting with Mannerist painting see K. Albala, *The Banquet: Dining in the Great Courts of Late Renaissance Europe* (Urbana, IL, 2007), pp. 16–19.



- 3 See however C. Burnett, 'The Superiority of Taste', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, LIV (1991), pp. 230–38.
- 4 See M. Rourke O'Boyle, *Senses of Touch: Human Dignity and Deformity from Michelangelo to Calvin* (Leiden, 1998), p. 110.
- 5 T. C. Leblond, *Le Dressoir du Prince. Services d'Apparat à la Renaissance* (Paris, 1995), p. 11.
- 6 F. Zuccaro, *L'Idée de' Pittori, Scultori e Architetti* (Turin, 1602), in *Scritti d'Arte di Federico Zuccaro* (Florence, 1961), pp. 239–40.
- 7 For a survey of Renaissance gastronomic literature see J. di Schino and F. Luccichenti, *Il Cuoco segreto dei Papi. Bartolomeo Scappi e la Confraternita dei Cuochi e dei Pasticciieri* (Rome, 2008), pp. 53–87.
- 8 T. Cave, *The Cornucopian Text* (Oxford, 1979), p. 3.
- 9 L. B. Alberti, *Della Pittura*, 28r: 'Perchè la prima cosa che ne l'historia da piacere, è la copia istessa e la uarietà de le cose.'
- 10 E. A. Bowles, 'Musical Instruments at the Medieval Banquet', *Revue Belge de Musicologie*, 1/4 (1958), pp. 41–51, p. 47.
- 11 V. Cervio, *Il Trinciante* (Rome, 1593), p. 88: 'le Signor Convitato doppio che havevano bevuto rompevano il beccchiere che tenevano in mano per segno d'allegrezza, e si sentiva alle volte si fatto strepito che occupava l'Armonia della perfetta musica, che si udiva dalli quattro chori, che erano in alto nel'i quattro cantoni della gran sala, quasi erano suoni & voce stupende.'
- 12 Messisbugo, in F. Bandini, ed., *Banchetti, composizioni di vivande e apparecchio generale* (Verona, 1960), pp. 43–52.
- 13 Albala, *The Banquet*, p. 11
- 14 Messisbugo, *Banchetti*, pp. 14, 57, 87, 95; Di Schino and Luccichenti, *Il Cuoco segreto*, pp. 133–4; B. Scappi, *Opera di M. Bartolomeo Scappi, Cvoco secreto di Papa Pio v . . .* (Venice, 1570), 192r.
- 15 Cervio, *Il Trinciante*, p. 93: 'una incanuciata à modo di spaliera, ripiena di varie verdure odorifere, cioè rami di cedri, di mortella, di rose, rosmarino, salvia, lauri, bossi, cerasse marine, & cose simile secondo la stagione'.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 87: 'Salviette piegate a varie fogge'; see also pp. 94, 119.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 124; Di Schino and Luccichenti, *Il Cuoco segreto*, p. 133.
- 18 Cervio, *Il Trinciante*, p. 132, see also Domenico Romoli, *La singular Dottrina* (1560); in praise of the art of folding in multiple shapes in *Arte della Cucina: Libri de Ricette, testi sopra lo Scalco, il Trinciante e i Vini dal XIV al XIX secolo*, ed. E. Faccioli (Milan, 1966), I, p. 353.
- 19 G. W. Pigman III, 'Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance', *Renaissance Quarterly*, xxxiii/1 (1980), pp. 1–33 (p. 32).
- 20 On the dresser, its history and content see Leblond, *Le Dressoir du Prince*,

- pp. 21–9; A. J. Grieco, 'Meals', in M. Ajmar-Wollheim and F. Dennis, eds, *At Home in Renaissance Italy* (London, 2006), pp. 249–50; Scappi, *Opere*, 192r: 'la Credenza ben fornita di varie sorte di tazze d'oro, d'argento, di maiolica e di vetro'.
- 21 See Schino and Luccichenti, *Il Cuoco secreto*, pp. 33 ff. On Cortona and Bernini see J. di Schino, *Tre Banchetti in onore di Cristina di Svezia, 1668* (Rome, 2000), pp. 25, 29.
- 22 See Firenzuola, *Dialogo delle bellezze delle donne* (Florence, 1548), p. 105; E. Cropper, 'On Beautiful Women, Parmigianino, Petrarchismo, and the Vernacular', *Art Bulletin*, LVIII/3 (1976), pp. 376–7.
- 23 Cervio, *Il Trinciante*, p. 88.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 120.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 132.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 120: 'Pasticci de lepri intieri coperti à modo di leoni dorati che tenghino una bandirola con l'arme delle sposi.'
- 27 Messisbugo, *Banchetti*, p. 44. Cervio, *Il Trinciante*, p. 119.
- 28 *Ibid.*: 'Dapoi si portarono sopra la tavola figure grandi di zucchero 25, le quali significavano le forze d'Ercole, quando vinse il Leone: la cui grandezza era più di due palmi e mezzo par ciascheduna, dorate e dipinte, colle carnagioni che parevano vive.'
- 29 Cervio, *Il Trinciante*, p. 88: 'Et il primo servitio di Credenza era le Insalate grandi lavorate di rilievo con diverse fantasie di animali fatte di Cedro, littere di radici, Castelli di rape, muraglie di limoni, adornate di sommate,prosciuto sfilato, bottarghe, aranghe, tarantello, alici, cappari, olive, caviale, fiori e altre cose condite; poi vi erano de pasticci di salvaggina a modo di leoni dorati, pasticci di aquile negre in piedi, pasticci di fasani che parevano vivi, pavoni bianchi rivestiti adornati con la rota della loro coda & pieni di fettucie di seta e oro di diversi colori con confetti longhi dorati a modo di pontali d'oro, che pendevano da per tutto alli pavoni, quali stavano in piedi come se fussero vivi, con un profumo nel picco acceso di fuoco, & un motto amoroso tra un piede e l'altro. Vi erano anco tre statue grande di pasta di marzapane di altezza quattro palmi l'una, et una era il cavallio di Campidoglio del naturale, l'altra un Ercole co'l leone el'altra un alicorno con'l corno in bocca al drago.'
- 30 Scappi, *Opera*, p. 193r. See also Cervio, *Il Trinciante*, p. 93.
- 31 *Sucre d'art* (Paris, 1978), p. 20; A.-M. Fioravani Baraldi, 'Gli Appareamenti del Banchetto', *A Tavola con il Principe*, exh. cat. (Ferrara, 1988), pp. 321–2, p. 322.
- 32 Zuccaro, *L'Idea*, p. 239: 'E si come la natura è copiosa e varia; e varie sono

l'Arti, così il buon pittore deve esser vario, e copioso, e procurar sempre d'imitar il meglio'.

- 33 E. Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (New York, 1991).
- 34 G. Della Casa, *Galateo*, II, II: 'Diciamo adunque che ciascun atto che è di noia ad alcuno de' sensi, e ciò che è contrario all'appetito, et oltre a ciò quello che rappresenta alla imaginatione cose male da lei gradite, e similmente ciò che lo 'ntelletto have a schifo, spiace e non si dèe fare. Perciò che non solamente non sono da fare in presenza degli uomini le cose laide o fetide o schife o stomachevoli, ma il nominarle anco si disdice; e non pure il farle et il ricordarle dispiace, ma etiandio il ridurle nella imaginatione altrui con alcuno atto suol forte noiar le persone.' Translation from *Galateo* (London, 1576), p. 5.

### Conclusion

- 1 L. B. Alberti, *Della Pittura*, II, 42, in *Opere volgari*, ed. C. Grayson (Bari, 1973), II, pp. 72–4; A. Laframboise, *Istoria et Théorie de l'Art: Italie, xve, xvie Siècles* (Montreal, 1989), pp. 49–52.
- 2 On the common sense see Chapter I above.
- 3 F. Quiviger, 'Honey from Heaven: Aspects of the Topos of the Bees in Renaissance Artistic Literature', in *Visuelle Topoi. Erfindung und tradiertes Wissen in den Künsten der italienischen Renaissance* (Munich, 2003).
- 4 G. Camillo Delminio, *L'Ideal del Theatro*, in *Scritti d'Arte del Cinquecento*, ed. P. Barocchi (Milan and Naples, 1973), II, pp. 1552–3.



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# PHOTO

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FRONT: Man tuning a lute, from an anonymous 15th-century fresco in the Palazzo Abatellis, Palermo. Photo © the author.

BACK: Anatomical diagram of the human head showing where sensory input is processed, from an illustration of the 1560s to Lodovico Dolce's *Dialogo... nel quale si ragiona del modo di accrescere e conservar la memoria*. Photo © The Warburg Institute, University of London.

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